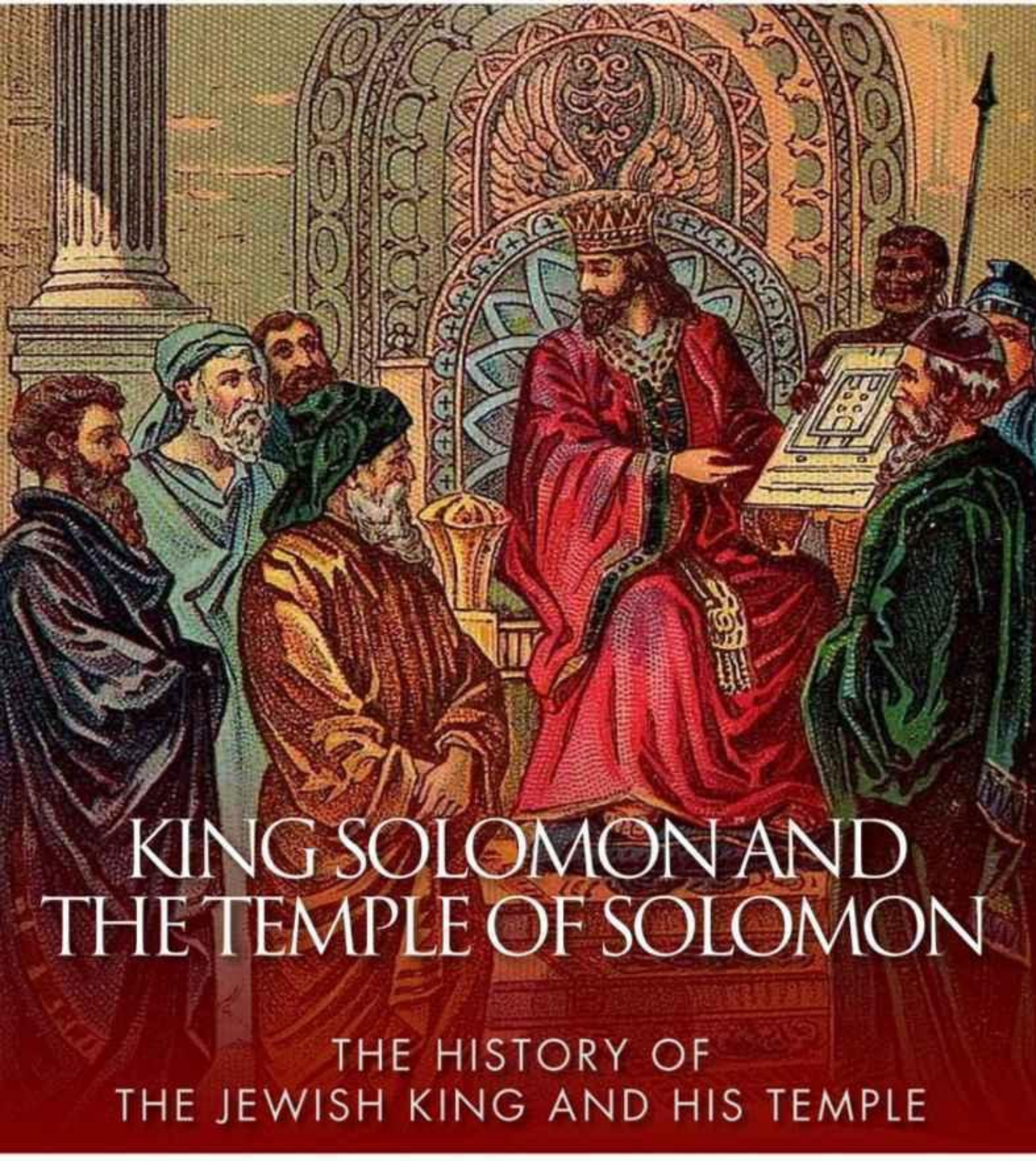
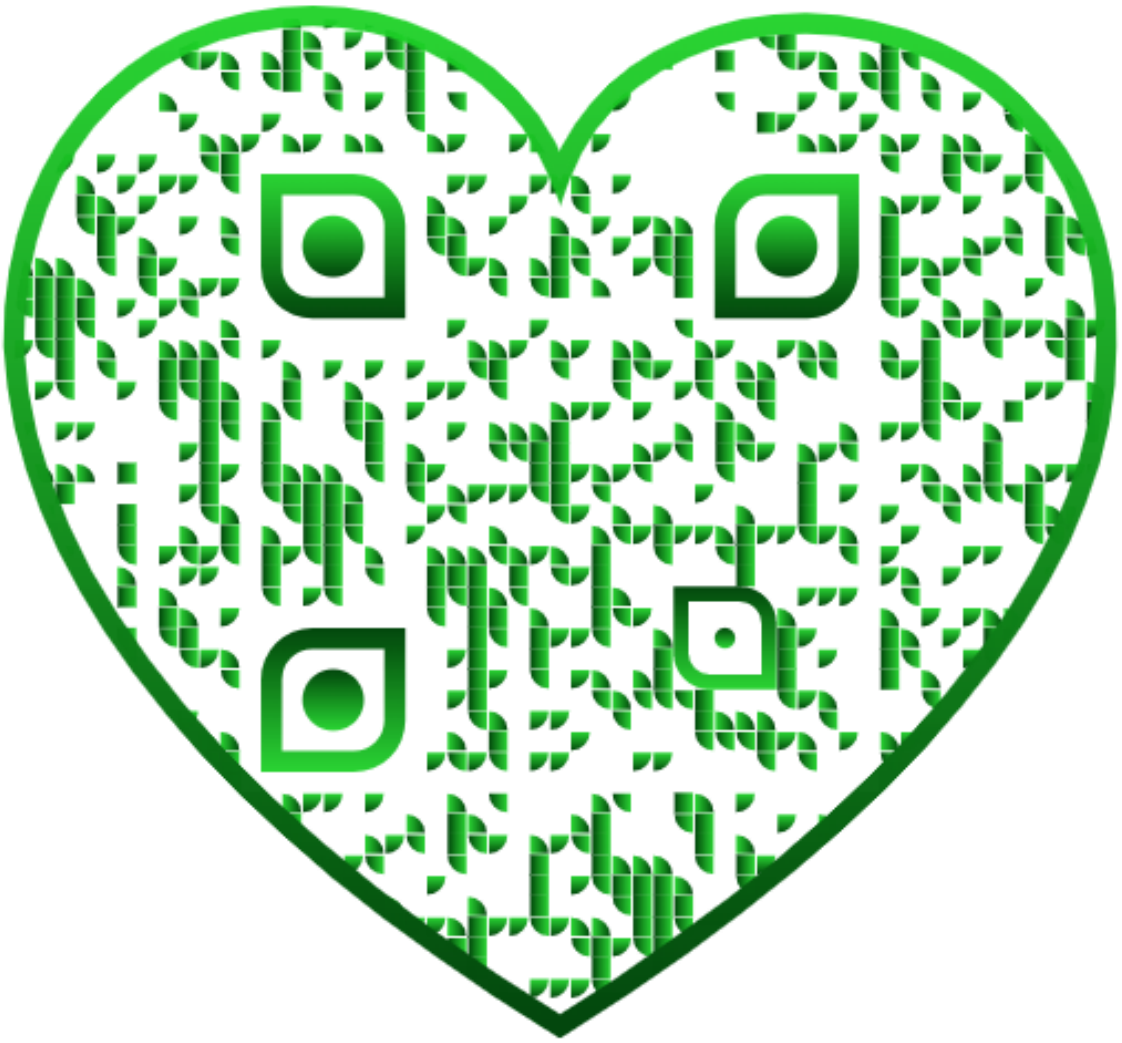


KING SOLOMON AND THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH KING AND HIS TEMPLE

by

CHARLES RIVER EDITORS



King Solomon and Temple of Solomon: The History of the Jewish King and His Temple

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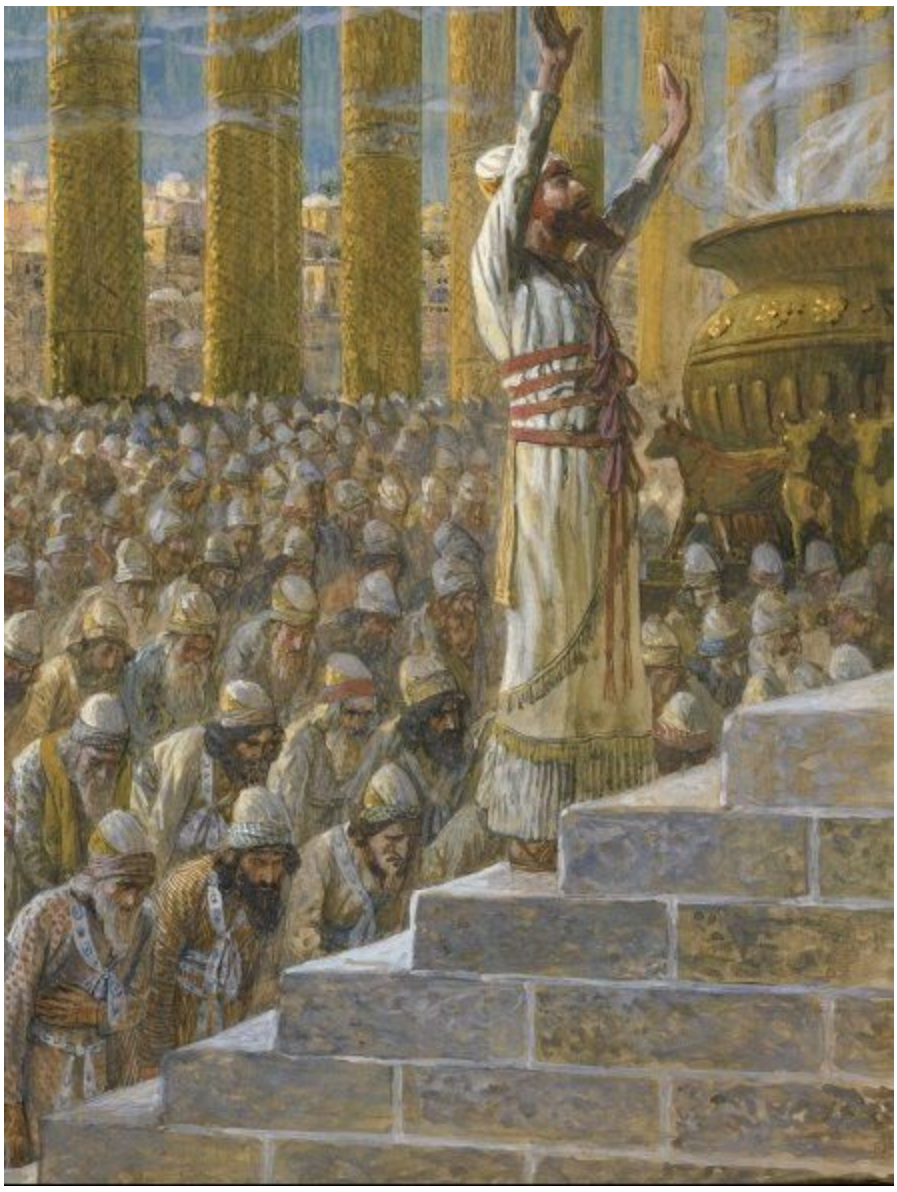

***Solomon Dedicates the Temple at Jerusalem*, by James Jacques Joseph Tissot**

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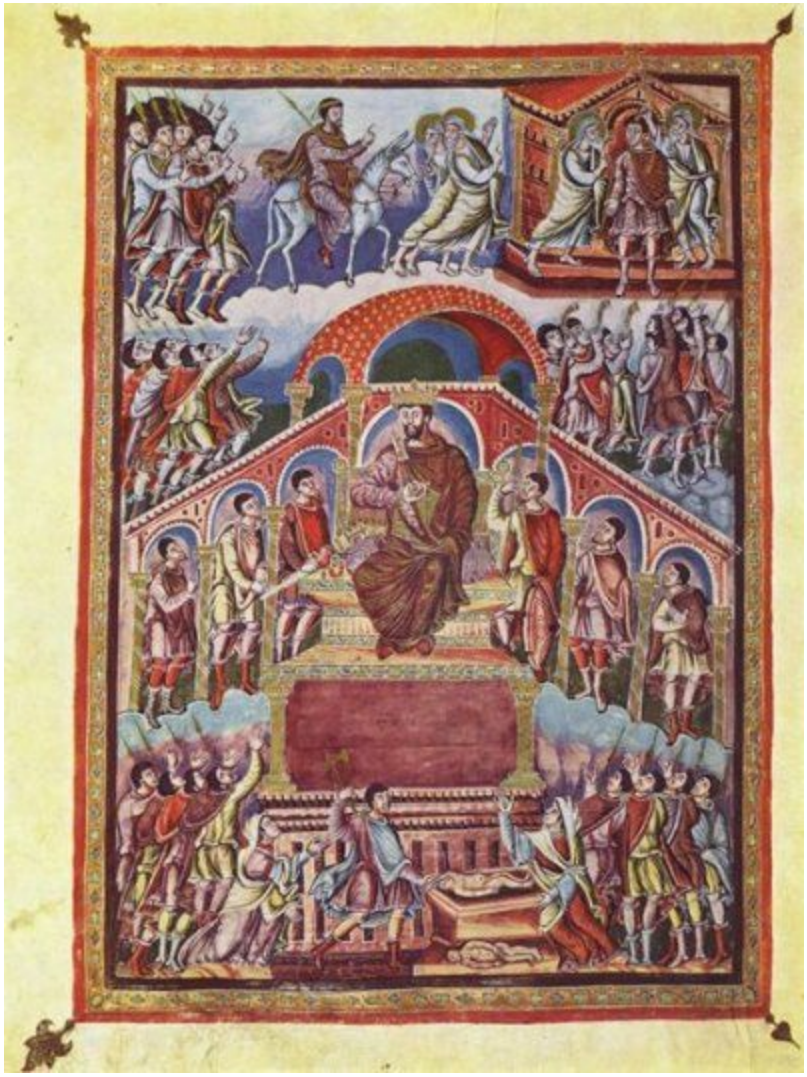
Introduction



Medieval depiction of King Solomon

King Solomon

"So Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites, went down, and caused Solomon to ride on king David's mule, and brought him to Gihon. 1:39 Zadok the priest took the horn of oil out of the Tent, and anointed Solomon. They blew the trumpet; and all the people said, 'Long live king Solomon!'" – The First Book of Kings

A lot of ink has been spilled covering the lives of history's most influential

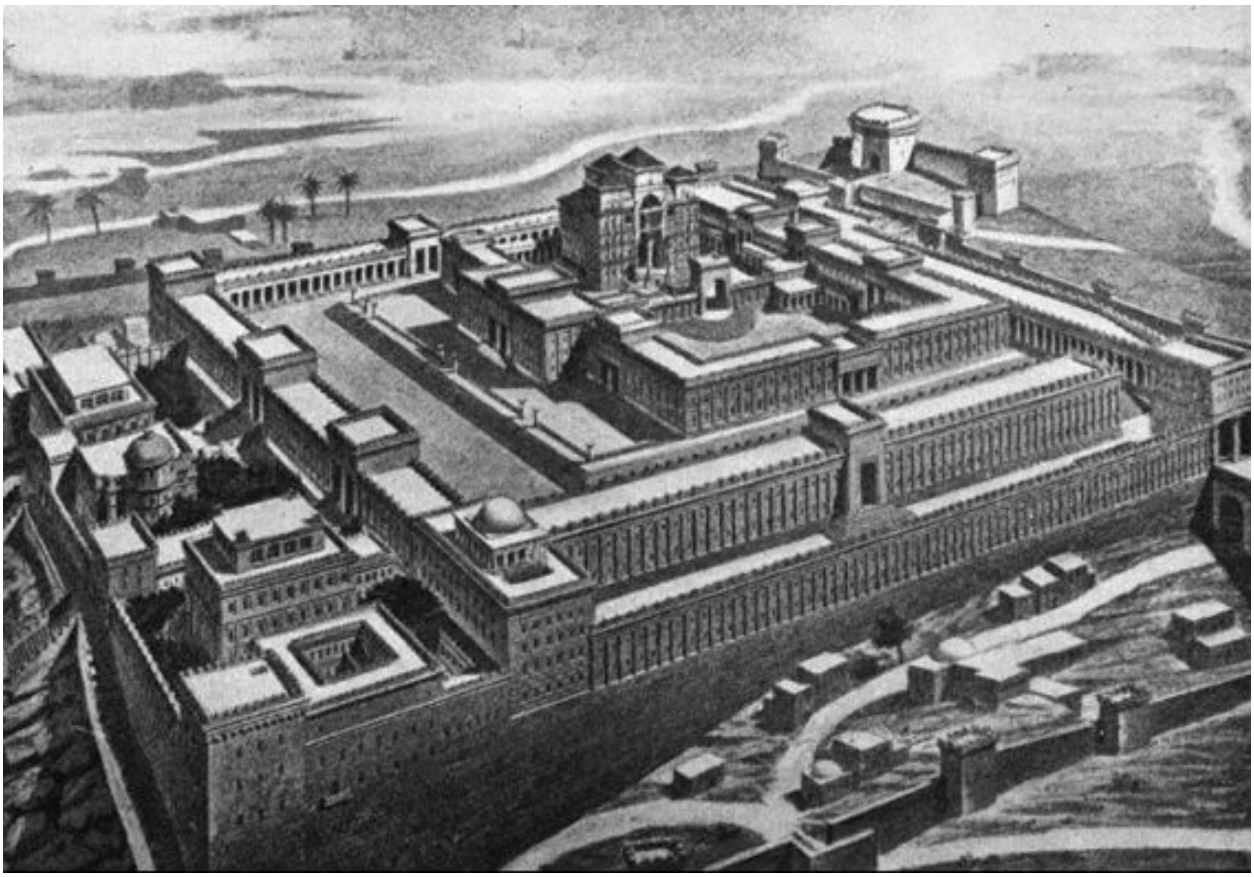
figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors" Legends of the Bible series, readers can get caught up to speed on the lives of the Bible's most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

King Solomon is one of the most famous men in the Bible, but also one of the most elusive historical figures. He is credited with supervising the construction of the first Temple in Jerusalem, and excavations and archaeologists continue to dig in an effort to find it in places that are now religiously sensitive for Christians, Jews, and Muslims.

Information about King Solomon comes almost exclusively from the book of Kings, occasionally supplemented by additional material found in the book of Chronicles. This is problematic for several reasons. First, the book of Kings does not simply record the actions of the king and the details of his reign for posterity; the author weaves a narrative that is often more concerned about making theological points rather than recording historical details. Moreover, the first edition of this book was written in the 6th century B.C. at the earliest, about four centuries after King Solomon would have lived, by an editor given the title of Deuteronomistic Historian. It is likely that this editor relied upon some type of royal "court history" as a source document.

The temptation with a figure like Solomon can be to go to one of two extremes. Some readers may want to look at Solomon only as a historical figure without acknowledging the literary elements that play a big role in his life story. Other readers may find themselves at the other extreme and view Solomon entirely as a literary figure, dismissing any historicity at all from his story. Given how important he is as a religious figure, it's necessary to keep in mind both the literary and historical elements of the monarch's story.

King Solomon and The Temple of Solomon discusses the life, history, stories, and Scripture passages about the famous king, examining the Bible and historical record to piece together an understanding of his life. Along with pictures and a bibliography, you will learn about King Solomon like you never have before.



An artistic rendering of the Temple of Solomon

Solomon's Temple

"In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the Lord." – 1 Kings 6:1

"In the year that king Uzziah died. I saw the LORD sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and His train filled the hekhal (sanctuary)." - Isaiah 6:1

There was not any one entity more central to the Yahwistic Judean religion during the monarchy than the temple of Solomon. It symbolized the presence of YHWH in the nation, as well as his enduring protection of the nation and the Davidic royal throne. Judean worshippers directed their prayers toward the Solomonic temple, and eventually, the Judean prophets and theologians declared that this was the only legitimate location where priests could perform sacrifices and other religious rites for YHWH. Its significance can be seen most clearly in the dramatic cognitive dissonance experienced by the

Judeans in Babylonian captivity after the destruction of the temple, which had been so central to their religious conception that they had great difficulty reconciling its destruction with their continued belief in YHWH at all.

The Temple and the Biblical descriptions of it have fascinated people for centuries and led to all kinds of conjecture and imagination. In addition to countless works of art, Isaac Newton tried to make a model of it in his writings, and he wrote about the temple extensively. Even Freemasons give a nod to Solomon's Temple by calling their meeting places temples as well. That said, the Temple remains an enduring mystery due to conflicting accounts and descriptions of it in the Bible, and some scholars have even put forth theories that the structure was not originally designed to serve religious purposes in the first place.

The Temple Mount remains the holiest place in Judaism over 2,000 years later, and due in part to that religious sensitivity and the current placement of the Al-Aqsa mosque there, archaeological work is almost nonexistent. As a result, some have continued to question whether Solomon's Temple ever actually existed, pointing not only to lack of physical evidence but also the fact that contemporary Jewish literature aside from the Bible makes no mention of it. The political tensions between the modern state of Israel and the Palestinians have also made the temple and all of Jerusalem contentious issues.

King Solomon and the Temple of Solomon discusses the history, mystery and controversy surrounding the temple, examining the Bible and historical record in an attempt to separate fact from fiction. Along with pictures and a bibliography, you will learn about Solomon's Temple like never before.

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King Solomon

Chapter 1: The Chronological Background for Solomon's Reign

The division of the United Kingdom into the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah happened shortly after Solomon's reign.

For most of its history, the nations of Israel and Judah politically served as pawns of the larger political powers in the region, including Egypt, Assyria and Babylon. The internal political turmoil in Egypt succeeded in removing its influence from the Levant between 1150 and 853 B.C. Similarly, the Mesopotamian powers of Assyria and Babylon would not dominate the southern Levant until later in the Neo-Assyrian period. The resultant power

vacuum was one major external factor that allowed for the rise of the 10th century kings, culminating in Solomon.

Another major factor in the move from a tribal organization (as reflected in the book of Judges) to a state was the population redistribution. In the 11th century, the region of Greater Israel consisted of a large number of small villages. There were some 300 of these villages that were abandoned in the 10th century. When the inhabitants of these smaller villages left, they moved to larger cities, which increased in density of population, and this process of "urbanization" is one prerequisite for state formation. Such urbanization had been a characteristic of the region during the Middle Bronze Age IIB-C (1750-1550 B.C.) with the large Canaanite city-states, so this new pattern of urbanization in the region has been termed a "re-urbanization." Archaeologists now estimate the population of Greater Israel in the 10th century to have been about 100,000 (Dever, 1997, 182).

The archaeological evidence discussed above regarding the cities of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer represents a handful of the 11 or so large regional administrative centers that emerged in this period (Dever, 1997, 184-85). The social economic structure shifted from a largely agrarian economy to a more stratified and specialized economic structure, and it also developed a certain sense of internationalism (Dever, 1997, 185-86).

The identification of the general period for Solomon's reign in the 10th century is well-established and enjoys a broad consensus. Even those scholars who would relegate Solomon to the realm of myth acknowledge that the 10th century is the setting in which the account of Solomon is set. That said, the actual dates of Solomon's reign are a more contentious issue. The end of Solomon's reign and division of the kingdom can be dated to 925 B.C., but establishing the date for the beginning of his reign is more difficult because the length of both David's and Solomon's reign recorded in the Deuteronomistic History is an even 40 years (Miller and Hayes, 1986, 220). This figure of 40 years is used throughout the Biblical narrative for a complete period of time and smacks of a made-up figure. Scholars have speculated that the Biblical account really means that Solomon's reign could have been roughly anywhere from 25-50 years long.

One possibility for synchronizing the dates of Solomon's reign occurs with

the King of Tyre, Hiram, who interacts closely with Solomon. Josephus preserves excerpts from a Phoenician history of Tyre written by a man named Menander of Ephesus, who lived in the early 2nd century B.C. According to Menander's history, as preserved by Josephus, Hiram began his reign 155 years before the founding of Carthage, and according to the Greek historian Timaeus, Carthage was founded in 814 B.C. This sets the beginning of Hiram's reign at 969 B.C. (Liver, 1953, 116). Josephus then dates the beginning of the construction of Solomon's temple to either the 11th (according to *Against Apion* i 126) or the 12th (according to *Jewish Antiquities* viii 62) years of Hiram's reign. If this is accurate, then this can be correlated with the 4th year of Solomon's reign (1 Kgs 6:1). This synchronization works well because it would place the beginning of Solomon's reign in 962 B.C., which would give Solomon a 37-year reign, quite close to the recorded idyllic 40 years. It would also mean that Hiram reigned for seven years of David's reign, allowing for the interactions between David and Hiram.

The main problem with such a synchronism is that it hinges on the identification of the 11th year of Hiram's reign as the year of the beginning of Solomon's temple, but this statement clearly derives from Josephus, not from Menander, his Phoenician source. There would have been no reason for Menander to cite Solomon's temple building project in his history of Tyre. Moreover, Josephus does not claim to derive this information from Menander, which begs the question of where he got the information. Some suggest that Josephus simply used dates given by Menander for the rebuilding of his own Tyrian temples, and others suggest that Josephus was relying on the Biblical dates for the completion of Solomon's temple (Katzenstein, 1965, 116). Whatever the case may be, it is unlikely that Josephus' synchronization proves any more reliable than the round number of 40 years provided by the Biblical authors. What is reliable is Hiram's 34-year reign as recorded by Menander from 969-935 B.C., which must have had a substantial overlap with Solomon's reign.

Chapter 2: Succeeding David

David's courtship of Solomon's mother is one of the most famous stories in all of the Hebrew Bible. David, who was (oddly) home during the military campaign season, voyeuristically spies the beautiful Bathsheba bathing from his palace rooftop and summons her for a tryst in the palace (2 Sam. 11:1-4). She returns to her house, where her husband, still away on a military campaign, is none the wiser (2 Sam. 11:4). But a few months later, she sends word to David that she is pregnant (2 Sam. 11:5). David then recalls her husband, Uriah, from the front lines and tries various ploys to ensure that he sleeps with his wife, so that he will not suspect foul play when she announces her pregnancy to him (2 Sam. 11:6-13).

After multiple failed attempts resulting from the integrity of Uriah, David then sends Uriah back to the campaign along with orders that the military commanders take strategic measures to ensure Uriah's death on the battlefield (2 Sam. 11:14-15). This maneuver is successful, and word comes back regarding Uriah's death (2 Sam. 11:16-24). Immediately after Bathsheba completed the requisite mourning period for the loss of her husband, David brings her to the palace for a royal wedding (2 Sam. 11:27).

***Bathsheba At Bath*, by Paolo Veronese**

This depiction of Solomon's mother Bathsheba by the Deuteronomistic Historian casts her very much in the role of an innocent helpless victim caught up in David's lust and deception. But then there is Bathsheba's statement in 1 Kings 1:17: "She said to him [David], 'My lord, you swore to your servant by YHWH your God, saying: Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne.'" This adds a less savory perspective to the story. Randall Bailey has argued that this statement, made by Bathsheba before David has made any official gestures indicating his choice of Solomon as his successor, indicates that this dynastic choice was a precondition Bathsheba set before she would marry David. Looking especially at the picture of Bathsheba provided in 1 Kings 1-2, Bailey suggests that Bathsheba actively sought to seduce the king and then used her pregnancy to blackmail him into granting her son the rights to his dynastic throne. This is one historical possibility, but there is another that would seem

to be much more compelling historically.

Solomon grew up in the royal palace of his father David with about 20 half-brothers and sisters, a large number due to the fact that David had offspring with at least 7 women. Although one might be tempted to conclude that Solomon was not the firstborn son of Bathsheba based on his order in the lists provided by Samuel, that order is most likely explained by a poetic convention in which the fourth member of a list (in this case Solomon) receives the emphasis (Cook, 2008). The fact that Solomon was the oldest of Bathsheba's sons is indicated not only by the narrative account that specifically states this (2 Sam 12:14-25), complete with a reference to Solomon's given name (Jedidiah), but also by the behavior of the political party that sought to install Solomon on the throne.

Different cultures develop different traditions regarding how royal power should be passed from one generation to the next. Even when the ideal transfer of power does not take place, the power of the tradition is reflected by criticisms of the "usurper." During the United Monarchy of the 10th century, it is difficult to determine what the tradition of royal succession entailed because the institution of kingship itself was new. However, in the larger surrounding nations that interacted with Greater Israel, like Egypt; Assyria; and the Hittite kingdom, the dynastic principle was operative with a strong preference for the eldest son (De Vaux, 1997, 101). In the geographically closer and similarly sized kingdoms of Ugarit and Syria, the king chose his successor from among his sons. In all of these ancient Near Eastern cultures, women were excluded from legitimate succession to the throne, and in the few cases they did seize power, they were criticized as illegitimate "usurpers" of the throne. And one strong theme that runs throughout the succession traditions in these cultures is the concept of divine choice (De Vaux, 1997, 100).

When David was on his deathbed, there were two factions of the royal court supporting two competing heirs to the throne. Two of David's oldest advisors and officials, Joab (the commander of David's army) and the priest Abiathar, favored Adonijah, presumably the eldest living son of David,[i] as the rightful heir to the throne by primogeniture. An opposing group, which also included military and religious leaders, supported Solomon as the

rightful heir to the throne by the king's choice. The problem in the case of Solomon was that the king's choice was not publicly proclaimed but was relayed to the people by the supporters of Solomon. The official version, written by the victors, is that Adonijah prematurely claimed the throne of his father and that Solomon, with the help of his supporters, killed Adonijah as a usurper, Joab as a conspirator, and exiled Abiathar as a co-conspirator.

The unofficial, reconstructed version of Solomon's accession to the throne goes something like this. David's court was divided between a conservative faction who were part of David's entourage when he reigned in Hebron and a more progressive faction who represented David's more recent policies as they emerged in the new capital of Jerusalem. The Hebronite "conservative" party supported Adonijah as the successor to David, while the Jebusite "progressive" party supported Solomon. Seeing that the king was in ill health, Joab and Abiathar took steps to make Adonijah, who they considered the heir to the throne, king. They called an assembly at En-rogel of the royal family and officials of David's court. Adonijah was unpopular with many of the officials, so they found a more politically viable candidate in Solomon, Bathsheba's eldest son. When the prophet Nathan, a prominent player in the opposition party, learned of this move, he acted quickly. He called Bathsheba, who was a native of Jerusalem and an active member of the Jerusalem political party, and in a move very reminiscent of the story involving Rebecca, her aged husband Isaac and her son Jacob, Nathan asked Bathsheba to "remind" her senile husband David about the oath that he had made to Bathsheba that Solomon would be his successor (Jones, 1990, 55). There is every indication that no such oath was known by anyone else in the royal entourage before this time, and the narrative records no such oath in the extensive description of David's marriage to Bathsheba.

In other words, Nathan had Bathsheba play on David's faulty memory. A common coping mechanism for people with dementia or Alzheimer's like symptoms is to claim to remember things that others indicate that they should remember. They will use this coping mechanism even if they have no memory of the original event. Therefore, by asking David whether he had not remembered his previous oath and then by couching Adonijah's actions as parallel to Absalom's attempted coup, Bathsheba convinces David to suddenly "recall" his oath to her regarding Solomon. Once Nathan and

Bathsheba were able to secure the oath of David by means of this ruse, they rushed to gather the other members of their political party, which included the priest Zadok and David's royal bodyguards, to proceed with a coronation ceremony for Solomon. Conspicuously absent from Solomon's coronation ceremony were the elders of Greater Israel:

> "So the priest Zadok, the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites, went down and had Solomon ride on King David's mule, and led him to Gihon. There the priest Zadok took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, 'Long live King Solomon!' And all the people went up following him, playing on pipes and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth quaked at their noise." (1 Kgs 1:38-40 NRSV)

Chapter 3: Solomon's Dream

Solomon and "wisdom" very quickly became terms that were inextricably linked, and his reign was noted for his shrewd understanding of economics, human psychology and international politics. According to Scripture, Solomon was in Gibeon making his usual sacrifices (1 Kgs. 3:4). While he was there, YHWH appeared to him in a dream and asked what he wanted (1 Kgs. 3:5). Solomon responded, "Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil." (1 Kgs. 3:9). This request pleased the Lord so much that he not only granted Solomon's request for "understanding" and "discernment" but also added, "I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life." (1 Kgs. 3:13-14).

This story provides the background for the multiple traditions that grew up concerning Solomon's great wisdom. One late tradition preserved in the "Wisdom of Solomon", a book contained in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible), expands upon this prayer at great length. This much more loquacious form of the prayer reads as follows (quoted from the more archaic King James translation to allow for a more lengthy quotation):

> "O God of my fathers, and Lord of mercy,
>
> who hast made all things with thy word,
>
> And ordained man through thy wisdom,
>
> that he should have dominion over the creatures which thou hast made,
>
> And order the world according to equity and righteousness,
>
> and execute judgment with an upright heart:
>
> Give me wisdom, that sitteth by thy throne;
>
> and reject me not from among thy children:

For I thy servant and son of thine handmaid

am a feeble person, and of a short time,

and too young for the understanding of judgment and laws.

For though a man be never so perfect among the children of men,

yet if thy wisdom be not with him,

he shall be nothing regarded.

Thou hast chosen me to be a king of thy people,

and a judge of thy sons and daughters:

Thou hast commanded me to build a temple upon thy holy mount,

and an altar in the city wherein thou dwellest,

a resemblance of the holy tabernacle, which thou hast prepared from the beginning.

And wisdom was with thee: which knoweth thy works,

and was present when thou madest the world,

and knew what was acceptable in thy sight,

and right in thy commandments.

O send her out of thy holy heavens,

and from the throne of thy glory,

that being present she may labour with me,

that I may know what is pleasing unto thee.

For she knoweth and understandeth all things,

and she shall lead me soberly in my doings,

and preserve me in her power.

So shall my works be acceptable,

and then shall I judge thy people righteously,

and be worthy to sit in my father’s seat.

For what man is he that can know the counsel of God?

or who can think what the will of the Lord is?

For the thoughts of mortal men are miserable,

and our devices are but uncertain.

For the corruptible body presseth down the soul,

and the earthy tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things.

And hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth,

and with labour do we find the things that are before us:

but the things that are in heaven who hath searched out?

And thy counsel who hath known,

except thou give wisdom,

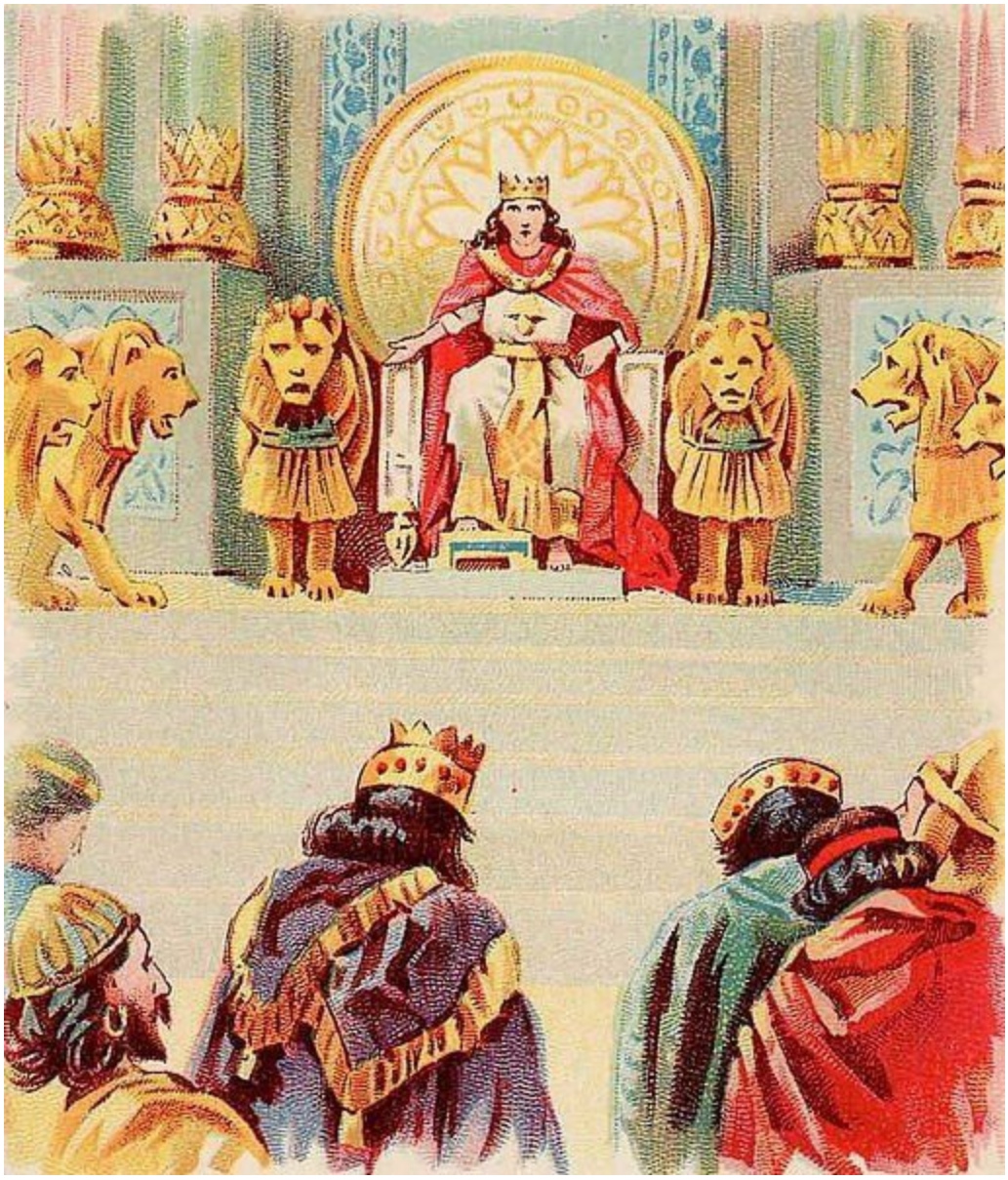
and send thy Holy Spirit from above?

For so the ways of them which lived on the earth were reformed,

and men were taught the things that are pleasing unto thee,

and were saved through wisdom.” (Wisdom of Solomon 9, KJV)

Chapter 4: Solomon's Wisdom



19th century Bible card depicting Solomon's Wealth and Wisdom

One of the earliest traditions about Solomon's wisdom is recorded immediately following the account of Solomon's dream. One of the chief tasks that fell upon kings in the ancient Near East was to provide justice for their subjects. In order to facilitate this, most kings in the region set aside time when they were available to their subjects directly to hear legal cases. The Deuteronomistic Historian describes in great detail one such case that appeared before Solomon. Two prostitutes who shared a residence came and

stood before the king and related their matter (1 Kgs. 3:16). Both women had become pregnant around the same time, and they both delivered their babies three days apart from each other in their shared home (1 Kgs. 3:17-18). One of the infants died in the middle of the night (1 Kgs. 3:19), and one of the prostitutes claimed that the other, recognizing she had lost her child, switched out the infants in the middle of the night, replacing her dead infant for the other's living one (1 Kgs. 3:20). When she awoke with a dead baby in her arms, she immediately realized that the dead child in her arms did not belong to her but that the other woman had tried to pull a fast one. (1 Kgs. 3:21). The other prostitute claimed that the woman was making the story up in order to take her baby from her out of grief (1 Kgs. 3:22).

The king listened to the case intently, summarized it to make sure he had heard the women correctly, and then called for a sword (1 Kgs. 3:23-24). When his attendants brought forward the sword as requested, Solomon turned to the sword bearer and instructed him to cut the infant into two halves and to distribute the evenly divided child to the two women (1 Kgs. 3:25). At hearing this, the living child's mother immediately cried out to the king to rescind his order and to hand the child over to the other woman (1 Kgs. 3:26). The other woman was content to see the king's order carried out (1 Kgs. 3:26). These emotional reactions gave the king what he had been looking for, and he ordered that the child be given to the woman who begged for the king to spare his life (1 Kgs. 3:27).

Another tradition about Solomon's wisdom appears in the next chapter and has the appearance of a separate tradition independent of those described above. The report read:

> "God gave Solomon very great wisdom, discernment, and breadth of understanding as vast as the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than anyone else, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, children of Mahol; his fame spread throughout all the surrounding nations. He composed three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He would speak of trees, from the cedar that is in the Lebanon to the hyssop that

> grows in the wall; he would speak of animals, and birds, and reptiles, and fish. People came from all the nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon; they came from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom." (1 Kgs. 4:29-34)

Of particular note in this description of Solomon's wisdom is that each of the elements assumes an illiterate society. Solomon is credited with the composition of multiple proverbs and songs, each of which are the types of compositions that are common in rural and illiterate societies where this material is memorized rather than written. Similarly, the kind of Farmer's Almanac knowledge attributed to Solomon in this notice is also frequently oral in nature rather than written. Yet another interesting feature of this tradition are the wise men, with whom the narrator compares Solomon's wisdom. Based on the text above, readers might be tempted to think that these were renowned sages whose lives preceded that of Solomon, but it looks as if these were instead contemporaries of Solomon who were sages employed in his royal court. The evidence for this conclusion comes from the Psalms. Two psalms in particular contained in the collection of Psalms of the "sons of Korah," the professional class of temple singers; Psalms 88 and 89 bear ascriptions to Ethan and Heman respectively. In this case, both of these figures bear the title "Ezrahite." According to William Albright, this term designates an "aborigine" or a "member of a pre-Israelite family" (Albright, 1942, 127, 210). The reason why these two men must have been contemporaries of Solomon rather than predecessors is because Psalm 89, attributed to Heman, is a royal psalm mentioning David and the Davidic royal line explicitly.

Some caution is warranted, however, in interpreting the language of Psalm 89. In his introductory literature review of the scholarship on the psalm, Richard Clifford states that "a scholarly consensus has developed which judges Psalm 89 to be a composite of poems of widely different dates" (Clifford, 1980, 35). Scholars have identified an old hymn (vv. 5-18 [Heb. 6-19]) that was later co-opted for use in a royal hymn (vv. 1-37 [Heb. 2-38]) (Dumortier, 1972, 176-96). The royal theology contained in this hymn promises a future for the monarchy that was shattered with the exile. It should come as no surprise then that later Jews who recited this hymn in the period after the exile felt it necessary to expand the hymn to explain its

meaning in their new context. These later psalmists added verses 38-52, thereby transforming the hymn into a lament.

The question then becomes at what stage of the development of the psalm the ascription was added. Childs notes, “A wide consensus has been reached among critical scholars for over a hundred years that the titles are secondary additions, which can afford no reliable information toward establishing the genuine historical setting of the Psalms” (Childs, 1971, 137). But there is also evidence that the superscriptions of the individual psalms were added before the five collections were brought together into a cohesive whole, because these superscriptions, like the Psalms of Asaph, are organizing principles among the collections. In other words, it is possible that the ascription of Psalm 89 to Heman was added to the psalm when it had the form of a royal psalm, before it was co-opted into a lament in the post-exilic period. Although the addition of this superscription does not indicate necessarily that Heman actually composed the psalm, what it does indicate is that later interpreters assigned this royal psalm (89:1-37) to the time of Heman, and thus to the time of Solomon.

Returning to this tradition about Solomon’s wisdom, it credits Solomon with composing 1,005 songs. Only two of the 150 canonical psalms credit Solomon as their author: Psalm 72 and 127. Concerning Psalm 72, Dahood says, “This prayer may well have been composed by a functionary of the Solomonic court. The language is in some verses very archaic, while vss. 1, 8, 10, 15 can all be applied to King Solomon” (Dahood, 1968, 179-80). Psalm 127 is very short, but it appears to be composed of several diverse wisdom sayings (Estes, 1991, 305). It is likely that the reference to the building of the temple in verse 1 (2 Heb.) inspired the connection with Solomon, but there is nothing in the psalm that would overtly prohibit a 10th century date for the material. Related to this tradition regarding Solomon’s songs is the statement that Solomon provided precious almug wood for the construction of costly lyres and harps that would be used by the temple and palace singers (1 Kgs. 10:12).

These two psalms can be contrasted with the collection of 18 psalms found in some manuscripts of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) called the “Psalms of Solomon,” which were not included in any

liturgical canon. These psalms were written in the 1st century B.C., since there were references to Pompey as ruler, and they do not contain anything in the text themselves that would link them to Solomon (Trafton, 1992, 115).

Even better known is Solomon's association with the Song of Songs. The title of this work in Hebrew begins with "The Song of Songs," which means "the best song" or "the sublime song." The title continues with "The Song of Songs, which is 'to/of' Solomon" that produces the English title "Song of Solomon." The Hebrew of the book, much like the Psalms and the book of Job, does not allow for precise dating (Murphy, 1992, 150). The book is a collection of Hebrew love songs and Solomon's many wives, and the mention of his name in the book accounts for his association with this book.

A much later collection of songs in this same tradition appears in the Syriac collection called "The Odes of Solomon." These odes or psalms were composed by a very early Jewish-Christian community in Edessa around 100 A.D. (Charlesworth, 1985, 727). In addition, the Qumran community, which produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, wrote incantations in the form of songs to ward off evil spirits. They attributed these to various Biblical characters, and 11Q11 is attributed to Solomon. Although both of these later compositions tell us very little about the 10th century monarch directly, they attest to how longstanding the tradition regarding Solomon's wisdom and his songs lasted.

The tradition of Solomon's wisdom and songs also makes reference to Solomon as a coiner of proverbs. It is this tradition that attributed the book of Proverbs to Solomon, "The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel" (Pr. 1:1). Regardless of this ascription, the book has a long compositional history and even contains chapters specifically attributed to other individuals (Westermann, 1995, 95). Chapter 30 contains the ascription "The words of Agur son of Jakeh. An oracle" (Pr. 30:1), and chapter 31 contains the ascription "The words of King Lemuel. An oracle that his mother taught him" (Pr. 31:1). Proverbs tend to be anonymous by nature, and very rarely can a particular date for their origin be identified.

Slightly less intuitive is the connection between Solomon and the book called Qoheleth in Jewish circles and Ecclesiastes in Christian circles. The book almost reflects a different stage in the wisdom tradition from proverbs themselves. It seeks to question traditional or conventional wisdom sayings

with a more skeptical view of life. The book begins with the sentence "The words of Koheleth son of David, king in Jerusalem" (Qoh./Eccl. 1:1, JPS). This title is a Hebrew word meaning "collector" or "assembler," and while the Protestant Reformers used the term "preacher" to translate this title, it more likely refers to this individual as a "collector" of proverbs (Crenshaw, 1992, 271). At the outset of the book (1:12-2:26) this individual engages in a royal experiment, the background of which is clearly intended to be that of Solomon. So here the author has gone one step further from tacking Solomon's name onto a work to intentionally writing from the perspective of Solomon.

Another book not included in the Hebrew canon that appears in the Septuagint is the "Wisdom of Solomon." This book is not a varied collection of wisdom sayings, like Proverbs, but an extended poetic description of Wisdom, extolling its gifts of immortality (1:1-6:21), describing Solomon's quest for Wisdom (6:22-10:21), and the role played by Wisdom in the Exodus (chs. 11-19).

Chapter 5: The Economy

One of the major accomplishments of Solomon's reign was to boost the economy of Greater Israel, which he managed to do by importing foreign resources and establishing international trade. One of the first things that Solomon did during his reign was to solidify his relationship with Hiram, the king of Tyre, who had worked closely with his father David. He did this in the typical Near Eastern political fashion by making a treaty with Tyre, which likely involved a ritual sacrifice and an oath that each party made before their respective gods that these deities should punish them with reprehensible curses if that party were to forget or neglect the terms of the treaty (Barré, 1992, 654-55). Fensham has also highlighted a treaty document among the Alalakh tablets that shows many parallels in language and form to the treaty described by the Biblical writers (Fensham, 1960, 59-60).

Once this treaty was ratified, Solomon opened up a line of credit with Hiram to get his economy rolling. Greater Israel was financially strapped, so he sold Hiram 20 fairly poor cities in the Galilee region in order to get an initial infusion of gold into the economy. This transaction was an extended one that would involve Hiram making 20 years of payments, at the end of which he would receive the promised cities (1 Kgs. 9:10-14). Next, Solomon offered Hiram yearly payments of grain and oil, which constituted Greater Israel's chief commodities, in exchange for the fine wood found in the Lebanese mountains that he could use for public building projects (1 Kgs 5:25). He then partnered with Hiram and gave him access to the trading port at Ezion-geber at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqabah, as well as building the necessary ships (with Phoenician wood), in exchange for Phoenician sailing personnel and expertise (1 Kgs 9:26-28). Although cargo shipments of precious metals as described here seem quite fanciful to modern ears, archaeologists recently excavated a shipwreck at Uluburun with a shipload of copper and tin ingots that dates from the Canaanite Late Bronze period hundreds of years prior to Solomon's activities (Brody, 2002, 65).

Once he got his foot in the door with international trade, Solomon then turned to the arms trade. He recognized that horses represented a prized commodity for military leaders, so he began to import horses from an area west and southwest of the Amanus Mountains called Kue and Muṣri (1 Kgs.

10:28). The latter area appears as Mişraim in the Hebrew text, which is the Hebrew name for Egypt, but Egypt makes little sense in this context. Kue and Muşri form a standard word pair in Assyrian records and are neighboring regions (May, 1984, 136). It would be very understandable for a scribe coming across this name and being unfamiliar with it to correct it to read Egypt by simply adding a final <m> to the word.

The divergences between the number of horses (12,000) in Solomon's kingdom (1 Kgs 10:26) and the number of horse stalls (40,000) he maintained (1 Kgs 4:26) suggests that these horses and the accompanying chariots (1,400) were not used exclusively for Solomon's own defense program but acted as a "rolling stock" that Solomon kept as he sold them to the Hittite and Aramean kingdoms (Brueggemann, 2005, 125). In this way, according to the literary tradition, Solomon acted as the middleman specializing in the procurement and delivery of goods rather than in the production of the goods themselves. It should be kept in mind, however, that "no evidence has been found for the use of chariotry or for the metal trappings for the harnesses of horses." (Pritchard, 1974, 35)

The Christian historian Eusebius quotes some correspondence between Solomon and the king of Tyre. Eusebius found this tradition in Polyhistor, who in turn cited Eupolemos as his source. Eupolemos claimed to have had access to copies of letters between Solomon and the King of Tyre. The letters in question, one from Solomon and then the reply back are transcribed below:

> "King Solomon to Suron, King of Tyre, Sidon and Phoenicia, his father's friend, greeting.
>
> You know that I have received the kingdom from my father David by help of the Most High God, who also enjoined on me to build a temple to the God who made heaven and earth, and furthermore to write to you to send me some of your men, who might stay and help us until we have fulfilled the requirement of God, according to the injunction laid upon me. I have written also to Galilee, and Samaria, and the land of Moab, and Ammon, and Gilead, to supply them with necessities from the country every month, 10,000 cors of corn (1 'cor' is equivalent to 6

‘artabae’) and 10,000 homers of wine (1 ‘homer’ of wine consists of 10 ‘measures’): and oil and the rest shall be supplied to them from Judaea, and from Arabia, victims for sacrifice on which to feed.”

“Suron to Solomon, the Great King, greeting.

Blessed be God, who made heaven and earth, who hath chosen a worthy son of a worthy father. As soon as I read your letter I rejoiced greatly, and gave praise to God for your succession to the kingdom.

And as to what you have written concerning the men in our various peoples, I have sent to you 80,000 Tyrians and Phoenicians, and as for a chief architect I have sent you a Tyrian man born of a Jewish mother of the tribe of David. He will both give you advice on whatever you might ask him of all things under heaven, relating to architecture, and he will carry out the work.

And with regard to necessary provisions, and to the servants whom I send to you, you will do well in commanding the local governors to provide him everything he might need.” (*Praeparatio Evangelica* IX)

The initial greetings of these letters follow a Greek pattern rather than a Semitic pattern. In addition, most of the information in both letters comes directly from the Biblical text, which is unexpected for an authentic letter. Eupolemos also quotes correspondence between Solomon and a Pharaoh named Vaphres, which has the same form as these two letters.

In addition to his relationship with the King of Tyre, the Biblical tradition highlights Solomon’s relationship with the Queen of Sheba (1 Kgs. 10). The Hebrew Bible contains multiple references to the kingdom of Sheba (Saba), all of which indicate that its economy was based on caravan trade in spices, gold and precious stones (van Beek, 1974, 40). Based on the archaeological evidence from the Sabaean kingdom in subsequent centuries, van Beek sketches the following portrait of the Queen of Sheba:

> “She would have lived surrounded by the accoutrements of an affluent civilization: a thriving trade that brought unparalleled prosperity; an irrigation agriculture that provided ample subsistence; a distinctive architecture in stone that was second only to that of Egypt in the ancient Near East in its execution and variety of ornamentation; a richness in metallurgy and stone carving as well as an abundance of artists and artisans who pursued these vocations; a high degree of literacy among the people, who had a keen appreciation of the importance of a written language and of their beautiful alphabetic script; and an art that is representational in a symbolic archaic manner.” (van Beek, 1974, 63)

It was from this setting that the Queen of Sheba heard of Solomon’s great fame and wisdom and came to challenge him to a battle of the wits. When she arrived in Jerusalem, she blessed YHWH and extolled his virtue. Unlike the interactions with Hiram of Tyre, this report of the interaction between the two monarchs can fairly easily be relegated to the field of legend. The description in 1 Kings 10 already has a quite legendary character and feel, and the name of the queen is not provided.

Solomon meets with the Queen of Sheba, a painting made by Piero della Francesca (1452-1466)

The later Jewish rabbinic community did not expand the legend of the Queen of Sheba very much. The rabbis did, however, come up with three riddles that the Queen of Sheba used to challenge Solomon. These are contained in the second Targum to the Book of Esther, *Targum Sheni*. According to this source, the queen challenged Solomon with three riddles that would differentiate him as a wise man if he were to succeed in answering them correctly. The first riddle went, "A cistern of wood : buckets of iron : they draw up stones : they cause water to flow", the answer to which was "a tube of kohl" (Silberman, 1974, 72). "Kohl" is a powder used in ancient feminine cosmetics that was carried in a reed tube. A metal applicator was then moistened and subsequently dipped into the powder to be used in a way

similar to modern mascara. Her second riddle was, "[Like] dust it comes forth from the earth : It is nourished from the dust of the earth : It is poured out like water : It illumines the house", with the answer being "Naphtha" (Silberman, 1974, 73). "Naphtha" is a liquid similar to quicksilver that is luminescent and flows from a hole in the ground. The third and final riddle ran:

> "A storm-wind rushes through their tops :
>
> It cries loudly and bitterly :
>
> 'Its head is like a rush.'
>
> It is praiseworthy for the free :
>
> Shameworthy for the poor :
>
> Honorable for the dead :
>
> Disgraceful for the poor :
>
> Joyous for the birds :
>
> Grievous for the fish." (Silberman, 1974, 73)

The answer Solomon easily gave was "flax." The linen made by flax appears in sails, which are wind-blown, fine clothes and rags, the flax seeds are eaten by birds, and the ropes made by flax catch the fish. These riddles are examples of the type of imaginative elaborations the rabbis engaged in regarding the Queen of Sheba.

The Ethiopian Christian community took this tradition and ran with it. The *Kebra Negast*, Ethiopic for "the Glory of Kings," is a central literary work in the Ethiopian tradition whose narrative centers around the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon. In these Ethiopian traditions, the Queen of Sheba did not just visit Solomon to verbally spar with him but also marry him. The basis for this is that the Hebrew word used in 1 Kings 10:2 (*bw'*) translated to "*came* to Solomon," which can also be used as a technical term for coitus (Ullendorff, 1974, 106). The purpose of the Kebra Negast was to cast Ethiopia as the legitimate heir of Israel as the chosen people of God having received the Ark of the Covenant in Aksum where it was transferred from

Jerusalem. Menelik, the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, founded the Solomonic dynasty of Ethiopia. The queen is given the name Makeda in the *Kebra Negast*.

Chapter 6: Marriage Alliances

The Christian theologian Clement of Alexandria quotes a statement by Laitus in "The Phoenicia", supported by a statement from Menander of Pergamus, that Hiram gave his daughter to Solomon (*Stromata* 1.114.2). But even though Solomon made many international alliances through marriage, there is no indication that one of those alliances was made with Hiram. The Biblical text, arguably closest chronologically to the events, only states that Solomon married Sidonian women, and there is no reason to think that Sidoninan and Tyrian would be synonymous in this context (1 Kgs. 11:1).

This also brings up the issue of Solomon's purported marriage to the daughter of the Pharaoh. Judging the historicity of this marriage alliance is one of the most difficult historical tasks related to the history of Solomon's reign. Using standard historical evaluation techniques, there are many strong arguments in favor of its historicity, but also several strong arguments against its historicity. On the one hand, Solomon's marriage to the daughter of the Egyptian Pharaoh is mentioned no less than five times in the narrative of 1 Kings 3-11, with each mention having a very distinct context and appearing archival in nature. She is mentioned: 1) in relation to Solomon's alliance with the Egyptian Pharaoh (1 Kgs. 3:1); 2) in a description of the construction of the royal palace (1 Kgs. 7:8); 3) in relation to the Egyptian conquest of Gezer and its subsequent absorption into Greater Israel (1 Kgs. 9:16); 4) in a description of building activities throughout Jerusalem (1 Kgs. 9:24); and 5) in a list of Solomon's wives (1 Kgs. 11:1). For Malamat, this positive evidence "places its veracity beyond doubt" (Malamat, 1963, 10). Archaeologists have corroborated the information about Gezer being destroyed by an Egyptian campaign into Philistia through excavations at Gezer itself and at other surrounding sites.

On the other hand, the text provides no mention of the name of this Egyptian princess, nor of the name of the Pharaoh, with whom Solomon supposedly allied himself. Generally, such lack of specific names is characteristic of generic notices added by later editors. Ash makes the following comment in this regard: "Any contract, monument, correspondence, and the like, surely would have included at least the name of

the pharaoh and the name of the princess as well, and there is no reason why the compiler would have omitted them." (Ash, 1999, 113). Even more damning than this observation, however, is the Egyptian tradition itself. Although Egyptian Pharaohs would ally themselves with other formidable empires (Mitanni, Babylonia, Hatti), the Pharaohs always took the daughters of other foreign rulers, whereas the reverse practice of giving a Pharaoh's daughter to another ruler is unprecedented throughout Egyptian history (Ash, 1999, 114).

A few scholars have tried to argue that exceptions to this general rule were made when Egypt was weak politically, and this time period would certainly count as one of those times. In support of this argument is the fact that a contemporary 10th century Edomite ruler, Hadad, was also reported to have married the sister-in-law of the Egyptian Queen Tahpenes, and it is hard to argue that such a report was fabricated by the Biblical authors based on propagandistic motives (Bartlett, 1976, 221-23).

However, if this negative evidence was not definitive enough, there is the note at the end of Solomon's reign about Jeroboam and the Pharaoh of Egypt. In that notice, the Pharaoh's name is mentioned explicitly as Shishak (Shoshenq I), who provides refuge and political asylum for Jeroboam (1 Kgs. 11:40). By itself, this note does not raise any eyebrows, but if Solomon's alliance with Egypt is kept in mind, it is quite anomalous. One wonders why a Pharaoh allied with Solomon would provide political asylum to one of his enemies, but those who believe Solomon married an Egyptian princess claim there's a plausible answer. The Pharaoh involved in the marriage alliance with Solomon would have been either Siamun or his son, Psusennes II. In either case, Pharaoh Shoshenq I (Shishak) begins a different (the 22nd) dynasty altogether and would not necessarily have honored any alliances made by his predecessors (Kuhrt, 1995, 624).

Putting all this data together could lead to a tentative conclusion that Solomon was married to an Egyptian princess during a period when this unusual practice was commonplace. Egypt sought to align itself with the smaller kingdoms in Syria-Palestine to prevent the larger political players from making inroads into their weakened country.

Chapter 7: Solomon's Administration

Solomon was just as shrewd in his domestic policies as he was in his foreign policies. At home, Solomon surrounded himself with capable administrators. He rewarded the prophet Nathan for his help in securing the throne by appointing his son Azariah as his chief of staff and his other son Zabud as an official priest, along with conferring on him the honorific title of "Friend of the King" (1 Kgs 4:5). He then made Benaiah, the head of David's bodyguards whom he had sent to assassinate Joab, the commander of the army, since Joab had been the previous commander of the army (1 Kgs. 4:4). In addition to these positions, he appointed two brothers as the equivalent of Secretaries of State (Elihoreph and Ahijah), a man to the equivalent of Secretary of Labor (Adoniram), and a Palace Superintendent (Abishar) (1 Kgs. 4:3-6).

In order to sustain the newly formed kingdom, Solomon implemented a series of economic reforms designed to maximize the profit generated from state-imposed taxes. He set up the equivalent of an Internal Revenue Service by dividing Greater Israel into twelve provinces, with regional governors over each. These provinces were each responsible for supplying the provisions to the court for one month out of the year. The Deuteronomistic Historian who made use of this source, which contained this list of territories, was confused about why there were 13 provinces if the duties were monthly and so did not name the Judean official in the list but mentioned him as an afterthought. However, since they followed a lunar calendar, Greater Israel had an intercalary 13th month every few years. The territory of Judah with its unnamed official likely fulfilled this responsibility during the years when the intercalary month occurred.

In the cases of Ben-deker and Ba'ana, archaeologists have excavated the 10th century governor's palaces in their respective regions, which were destroyed by Pharaoh Shoshenq I in his campaign into Palestine in 925 B.C. around the end of Solomon's reign (Stager, 2003, 68).

Solomon also imposed a royal tax on grain, wine and cattle applicable to the general population to support the apparatus of the state. Solomon then adopted various positions on the royal ownership and distribution of land. In

addition to conquering small neighboring kingdoms, Solomon acquired land wholesale by decreeing that all “ownerless” land in Greater Israel was to become the property of the crown (Albertz, 1994, 112). The palace was then permitted to either loan out parcels of land or to reward officials with large swaths of land as gifts for their loyalty.

Chapter 8: Solomon's Building Projects

One of the most common tasks that a king in the ancient Near East engaged in was the construction of public buildings or infrastructure, including palaces, temples, fortifications, roads, canals, and the like. It should come as no surprise then to find Solomon engaging in these activities as well.

In order to accomplish this goal, a labor force was needed. David and many of the other Near Eastern kings used slave labor that they had procured during military campaigns for this purpose (2 Sam. 12:31). In fact, Solomon is unique among the later kings of Israel and Judah, who only relied on forced labor under rare and extreme circumstances, because Solomon used forced labor as the engine that drove the economy. He could not do without it. Adoniram, his "Secretary of Labor", set up a three-month rotating schedule for the laborers with one month on and two months off (1 Kgs. 5:14).

A summary of Solomon's building activities appears in the Deuteronomistic Historian's account of Solomon.

> "This is the account of the forced labor that King Solomon conscripted to build the house of the LORD and his own house, the Millo and the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer (Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burned it down, had killed the Canaanites who lived in the city, and had given it as dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife; so Solomon rebuilt Gezer), Lower Beth-horon, Baalath, Tamar in the wilderness, within the land, as well as all of Solomon's storage cities, the cities for his chariots, the cities for his cavalry, and whatever Solomon desired to build, in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion." (1 Kgs. 9:15-18)

Left out of this particular summary (and probably left out intentionally) are the temples to foreign deities that Solomon built, like the temple of Chemosh and of Molech (1 Kgs. 11:7). The book of Qoheleth/Ecclesiastes gives a slightly less sterile view of Solomon's building activities:

> "I made great works; I built houses and planted vineyards for myself; I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all

> kinds of fruit trees. I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees." (Qoh./Eccl. 2:4-6)

As divine appointees, the construction and refurbishment of temples was one of the primary ways that kings publicly expressed their gratitude to the deity. Solomon's association with the building of the temple of YHWH in Jerusalem is quite strong. Using his gang of forced labor, in combination with the contractors from Phoenicia, Solomon built the temple of YHWH as a small part of a larger royal complex. The continued religious significance of the site has not allowed for any archaeological work on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem today, and despite the detailed temple plan provided in 1 Kings 6-7, scholars are unable to draw more than a very general blueprint because of gaps in the information provided, like the width of the walls (Miller and Hayes, 1986, 202). What is clear is that this tripartite plan is a departure from the earlier Israelite sanctuaries that were undifferentiated without distinct chambers. This general plan also appears in 10th century temples found at Tell Tainat, Samal and Hamath in Syria (Miller and Hayes, 1986, 203). The three chambers of the temple included the vestibule, the holy place, and the most holy place (Brueggemann, 2005, 89).

The prophet Nathan figures prominently in the narrative surrounding the construction of the temple, a fact that dovetails nicely with his pro-Jebusite/Jerusalem. Nathan appears not only in the narratives surrounding the building of the temple itself but also in the narrative that describes David's desire to build a temple for YHWH and the divine decree to leave that work to his son.

According to the narrative, David approaches Nathan and complains that he now lives in a royal palace, whereas YHWH lives in a tent. Nathan initially replies to David with a positive divine response supporting David's idea, but then he receives a strong message from YHWH directly contradicting his initial response. He makes a conservative appeal to historical precedent, suggesting that YHWH has never before needed and never will need a permanent residence. In this way, YHWH stands apart from the other deities in the region. This objection also champions the theological position of the tribal confederation before it was ruled by a monarchy. The 12 tribes were joined in what has been coined an ancient "amphictyony." This term is

borrowed from Greek history, where it refers to a league of independent states or tribes that become united for mutual protection and the worship of a common deity. In such a league, the idea goes that a permanent central sanctuary would give precedence to one tribe over the others. Prior to the United Monarchy, Greater Israel had sanctuaries dedicated to YHWH in Shiloh, Shechem, Gilgal, and Gibeon, just to name a few. Although at times some of these sites acquired a certain prestige over the others, the shift in their prominence in the region is recorded in various sources. The initial oracle from Nathan (2 Sam. 7:5-7) objects to David's plans along those lines.

This tradition has the added benefit of drawing the reader's attention away from the link between the Jerusalem temple and the pre-state Jebusite sanctuary at the site. David had brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem and set it up on a rounded, hilltop city shrine. In this way, "the ancient Israelite shrine now stood in a Canaanite place of worship in a Canaanite city" (Noth, 1983, 191). But by focusing on the fact that David kept the Ark in a tent until it was transferred into the Solomonic temple, the narrative gives the impression that Solomon constructed the temple on cultically virgin soil (Albertz, 1994, 130).

The second oracle (2 Sam. 7:8-16) takes a different tact. Rather than appealing to the past as justification for denying David's request, it looks to the future. In this oracle, YHWH explains to David that he will not build a house for YHWH, rather YHWH will build a house for him. This juxtaposition makes use of a play on words in Hebrew, where the Hebrew word for house (*bayit*) can convey both a "temple" and a "dynasty." Because David is the recipient of an everlasting dynasty, he will not be the one to build the temple for YHWH. Many scholars consider this second "oracle of Nathan" to be the origin of messianic thought in Israel (Jones, 1990, 59-60).

Nathan certainly lies at the origin of the royal Zion theology that surrounds the building of the temple. This theological construct contains the following tenets: 1) YHWH chose Jerusalem specifically as the city for his immediate presence on earth; 2) YHWH appointed David and his descendants to rule from Jerusalem forever; 3) the temple in Jerusalem functions as the center of the cult of YHWH; 4) the Davidic king performs an intermediary role between YHWH and the people; and 5) the continuation of the Davidic

dynasty and the protection of Jerusalem are both dependent upon the continued faithfulness of the king and his people to YHWH (Miller and Hayes, 1986, 203). In addition to this "oracle of Nathan," this theology is evident in Solomon's prayer (1 Kgs. 8:46-53) and most poignantly in a number of the psalms (Ps. 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 46; 48; 72; 76; 84; 87; 101; 110; 121; 122). Jerusalem becomes the cosmic center of the universe, where YHWH sits upon his throne reigning as king over creation. It is this theology, where the king adopts the title "the son of God", that becomes such a central theme in later Christian theology.

Chapter 9: Solomon's Religious Practices

Solomon's religious practices and beliefs can best be described as syncretistic Yahwism. Solomon's birth name, Jedidiah, contains a Yahwistic element, and there is no reason to doubt that Solomon was responsible for building the temple of YHWH in Jerusalem. But unlike his biographer, the Deuteronomistic Historian, Solomon did not limit himself to worshipping YHWH alone. There is inscriptional and archaeological evidence that many of the worshippers of YHWH in Greater Israel worshipped YHWH along with his Asherah, conceived as his wife or consort. Asherah and Astarte were often conflated during this time.

An ancient statue of Asherah

The Deuteronomistic Historian credits all of Solomon's extra-Yahwistic

worship activities to the influence of his foreign wives, but this was likely a theological coping mechanism. Solomon was likely comfortable worshipping Chemosh and Molech alongside YHWH and his Asherah throughout his reign without thinking twice about it (1 Kgs. 11:7-8). Such syncretistic practices were probably common in Greater Israel during the 10th century.

Chapter 10: The End of Solomon's Reign

The Deuteronomistic Historian recorded multiple enemies of Solomon that began to assert their power more vociferously at the end of his reign. There is reference to Hadad the Edomite, Rezon son of Eliada, and Jeroboam the Ephraimite all causing problems for Solomon at the end of his reign after they had been sent into exile. Rezon had gone into exile in Damascus, and there he set up his base of operations. Hadad and Jeroboam had both gone to Egypt and received their support from there. When this fact is combined with the attack of many of the cities throughout Greater Israel by Shoshenq I, it is clear that Egypt had shifted from a policy of alliance with Greater Israel to wanting to subjugate it. This shift in policy coincided with the political upheaval and shift in the ruling dynasty in Egypt.

With his wives and concubines numbering over 1,000 according to the Biblical text, Solomon must have had many children. But unlike David, whose children had their names recorded, the name of only one of Solomon's sons has been preserved: Rehoboam. Rehoboam was not as charismatic as his father, and when he tried to assert his own authority as his father had done, the people recoiled from him and turned to another of Solomon's officials: Jeroboam. Jeroboam had been given charge of the forced labor in Manasseh and Ephraim. He had also received a prophetic oracle from Ahijah, who, in a prophetic act typical of the Hebrew prophets, tore his own garment in front of him into 12 pieces and gave Jeroboam 10 of them. This prophetic activity foretold that although the Davidic line and throne would continue through Rehoboam, he would only hold onto a small part (Judah and Benjamin) of what was under Solomon.

Chapter 11: Did Solomon Really Exist?

As is often the case with Biblical figures, both religious scholars and historians in general try to trace the roots of the larger than life figures that had a profound impact across the centuries. This is also true among skeptics, many of whom often point to similarities between stories contained in the Bible and other civilizations' religion and mythology.

Not surprisingly, King Solomon, who is believed to have lived about 3,000 years ago, is one of those figures. The renowned Sumerologist, Samuel Noah Kramer, wrote a short study published in 1991 in commemoration of Hayyim Tadmor's 85th birthday. In his short essay, Kramer outlined the literary parallels between the Sumerian texts that describe the ruler Šulgi with the account of Solomon in the Kings narrative. Both figures (Solomon and Šulgi) were the second rulers in their respective dynasties (the Davidic and the third dynasty of Ur). Both men were the children of prominent military figures (David and Ur-Nammu) who served in the service of their royal predecessors (Saul and Utuhegal of Erech), to whom they were not related. These predecessors had each delivered their people (the Israelites and the Sumerians) from the cruel and oppressive yoke of a powerful enemy (the Philistines and the Gutians). The fathers of both figures did not inherit the throne by the usual rules of succession and could be considered usurpers. Their respective fathers moved the seat of their kingship from one city (Hebron and Erech) to another (Jerusalem and Ur) and extended the territory under their rule significantly. Both of their fathers had longed to build a temple for their respective deities (YHWH and Nanna), but were frustrated and disappointed in their attempts at this endeavor. Nevertheless, their deities (YHWH and Nidaba) endowed these men with supernatural wisdom and intelligence. Both men were described as accomplished singers, diplomats and sages. (Kramer, 1991, 189-95).

Kramer's essay is not necessarily proof that the two men were one and the same, or that they both were fictional characters based on one overarching legend. In fact, some of these similarities may be compared with the types of similarities that psychologists note between children in similar birth order. Second born children tend to have many of the same general qualities, and such may be the case for the social factors involved for the second kings

within a given dynasty. Having said that, the narrative parallels seem too close to chalk up to pure coincidence. Considering the fact that Šulgi reigned during the 20th century B.C. and Solomon reigned about 1,000 years later during the 10th century B.C., it is not difficult to imagine that the Israelite royal scribes, who read Akkadian, which was the lingua franca of the time, would have noted a few historical parallels between the two figures and may have played up this parallel even further.

One group of Biblical scholars, known as the Copenhagen school, have noted such observations of literary license in these stories and taken them as evidence that the United Monarchy was an entire myth constructed out of whole-cloth by later Judean writers out of nostalgia for an earlier Golden Age. But just as literary scholars were beginning to dismiss the United Monarchy as an ideological construct created during the post-exilic period, archaeologists were speaking more boldly about the period as being rooted in fact and history.

An overview of some of the most striking 10th century architectural features discovered by archaeologists is in line with Scripture. In 1 Kings 9:17-19, the Deuteronomistic Historian mentions six notable "storage cities," "chariot cities" and "cavalry cities": Hazor; Megiddo; Gezer; Lower Beth-Horon; Baalath; and Tadmor. Excavations at Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer have corroborated these statements in large part. These three cities contain multiple architectural features that are remarkably uniform, attesting to a type of public building policy one would expect from a monarchy. What makes this case convincing is that Megiddo and Hazor lie in what later became northern Israel, whereas Gezer was a Philistine city that would later become part of southern Judah. These cities had casemate walls that were popular only in the 10th century and then disappear from the archaeological record subsequently.

In addition to these three prominent cities named directly in the Biblical text, around 50 other fortress sites display these casemate walls. They consisted of two parallel walls, each between about 3-5 feet thick with a gap between 5-15 feet wide. The two walls were then linked by cross walls. The rooms created in the gap between these two walls were most likely used for storage, which would correspond with the term "storage cities" (Meyers,

1998, 248). The most prominent feature of these walls was the city gates, which also appear at Lachish and Ashdod. They contained three chambers on each side with projecting towers all made of ashlar stone blocks, and the distance of the passageway between the tower and chambers was exactly the same (about 15 feet or 8 royal Egyptian cubits) at all five sites (Mazar, 1992, 385). Megiddo also contains a structure that some archaeologists have identified as "stables," though other archaeologists argue they were storehouses (Mazar, 1992, 382).

From a purely literary standpoint, this notice in the book of Kings has all the marks of authenticity as well. The account notes that the king conscripted forced labor, which he kept in line with whips (1 Kgs. 12:11, 14), which does not sound very endearing. It thus meets the "embarrassment" criterion, which is one of several literary checks that points towards the authenticity of a historical narrative. The specificity provided by the named list of cities is another indication that the notice is authentic.

Readers and scholars are best served by keeping both extremes of the debate in mind and examining Solomon's life both carefully and critically. Comments from Professor Stager, the Dorot Professor of the Archaeology of Israel at Harvard University, hardly a bastion of fundamentalist conservatism, address the problems with both extremes.

> "…if scholars begin their inquiry into the sources—whether biblical, inscriptional, or archaeological—convinced that the period of the United Monarchy is a complete fiction and its kings did not exist, this eliminates a priori such evidence as the list of Solomonic officials and the provinces of his kingdom, a document that every great biblical scholar has considered, in part or in full, authentic. (Stager, 2003, 64)

> "It matters little to us whether the biblical accounts are 'true' in the positivistic sense. We can gain insight into the minds of the ancient Israelites by understanding what they believed to be true." (Stager, 2003, 63)

Stager then concludes his discussion of the Solomonic kingdom with the following remark:

> “With an accurate chronology established by Egyptian sources through Shishak’s campaign in Palestine in 925 B.C.E., an adequate understanding of what statehood entails through historically generated typologies, rich symbols from biblical and inscriptional sources, and a ripe field of archaeological remains from these symbols, we can declare with some confidence that the United Monarchy of Israel already existed by the 10th century B.C.E. and flourished even after its division.” (Stager, 2003, 71).

In other words, it’s important to draw from both the literary and archaeological information to get a full picture of this important figure in the history of Greater Israel. And it’s unlikely the debate over the historicity of Solomon will abate anytime soon.

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Solomon's Temple

Temple Terminology

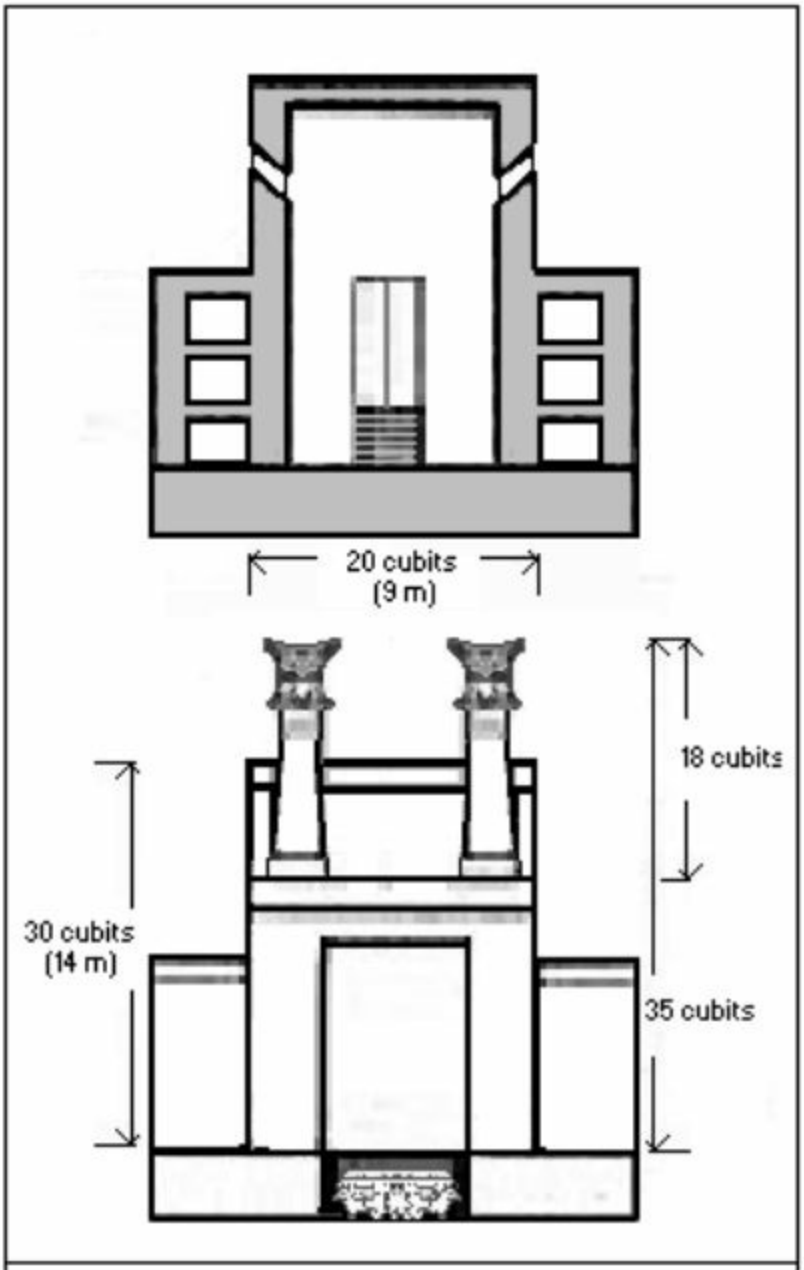
The Hebrew word for temple, *hêkal*, has a fairly long history that is worth exploring. The word is not native to Hebrew but had become common in the ancient Near East appearing in several languages, and the form of the word that spread was the Akkadian word *ekallu*. Like many words in the Akkadian language, the word *ekallu* was itself borrowed from Sumerian, but since most of the Semitic languages do not form words beginning with a vowel, the various languages that borrowed the word supplied an initial *h*-.

The Sumerian word for temple was a compound É.GAL, with the first element É meaning "house" and the second element GAL meaning 'big', so that the temple is the 'big house'. This Sumerian compound was used just as frequently for palaces as it was for temples.

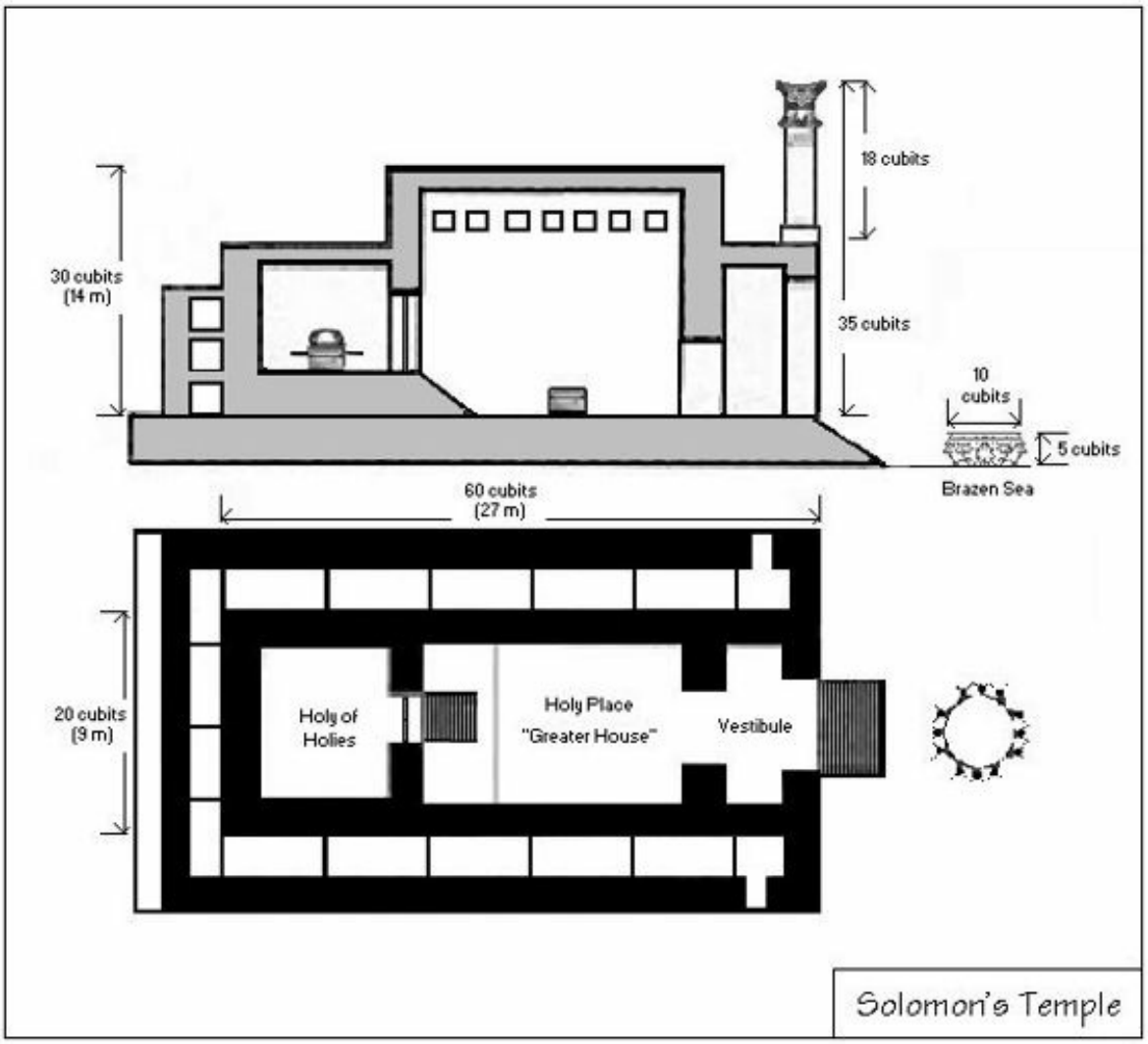
An interesting point in this regard is that the native Hebrew term used less frequently for the temple was *bêt YHWH*, or "the house of YHWH". This demonstrates continuity in the ancient Near Eastern conception of the role of the temple. Whereas the palace was the *bêt hammelek*, or "the house of the king", the temple constituted the house of the deity, and thus where the deity resided on Earth. The similarity between the palace and the temple in the ancient Near East is so strong that in many cases, archaeologists are unsure as to whether what they have uncovered in their excavation work is a temple or a palace (de Vaux, 1997, 283).

The Book of Ezekiel uses a third term, *miqdaš*, usually translated "sanctuary" or "shrine," as a reference for the entire temple complex, including its courtyards (e.g., Ezek. 44:1). One late psalm also uses this term as a reference to the temple building itself: "They set your sanctuary on fire…" (Ps. 74:7).

Literary Sources for Solomon's Temple



Solomon's Temple facing east.



Models of the temple based on the Biblical descriptions

There are four primary texts upon which readers must rely when studying Solomon's temple. The first text appears in the Deuteronomistic History and extends from 1 Kings 5 through 1 Kings 9, and it's especially important to remember that the earliest edition of the Deuteronomistic History (consisting of Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, and 1-2 Kings) was written at the end of the Judean monarchy approximately 30-40 years before the destruction of the temple in 587 BCE. This is around 350 years after the time when Solomon would have built the temple.

What is interesting in this regard is the different character of the sections of this wider narrative. Solomon's negotiations with Hiram in chapter 5 and the dedication of the temple in chapter 8 are both replete with Deuteronomistic

phraseology and vocabulary that runs through the entire Deuteronomistic History from Joshua through 2 Kings. The details of the layout of the temple, on the other hand, are contained in chapters 6-7 and show a conspicuous lack of this Deuteronomistic flavor, lacking the characteristic wording (Van Seters, 1997, 46).

In addition to this, 1 Kings 6:1, 36-37 uses archaic month names to describe both the month the temple construction began and the month it was completed. Van Seters (1997, 52-53) makes a curious argument that these two month names are not actually archaic, as most scholars argue, but rather that they are chronologically late names for months that were inserted into the narrative. That said, his arguments reflect a simplistic view of language development uncharacteristic of the majority of his scholarship. The Hebrew language is descended from an earlier common Semitic language, which branched eventually into a common Canaanite language before the individual languages in this sub-branch split into the attested languages. Phoenician (which is simply the Greek translation of "Canaanite") belongs to this Canaanite family of languages that shares its ancestor language with Hebrew. Phoenician (with texts from 11th century BCE to the Hellenistic period) and Ugaritic (with texts from the 14th century BCE) both use a set of month names that would have been the earliest dating system used by the Canaanites and the Israelites. At some point later in their history, under the influence of Babylonian domination, they adopted the Babylonian dating system along with their month names. It is this Babylonian dating system that appears throughout the Hebrew Bible, save for these three verses, and this Babylonian dating system continued throughout the Hellenistic period.

It's also important to note the fact that just because the only extant texts in Phoenician that contain these month names are from the Hellenistic period, it does not mean that this is the date the Phoenicians started using this dating system. There is no reason to think that the Phoenicians used any other dating system throughout their history, while the most likely time period when Israel would have been using this dating system is early in its history. Van Seters' (1997, 52-53) argument that these month names were borrowed by a later scribe and inserted into this text for some unknown reason is quite difficult to accept, and this use of archaic dating formula and the literary style of this passage have led several scholars to suggest that these chapters rely on

either an ancient royal building inscription, common throughout the ancient Near East at the time, or on archival records (Montgomery, 1951, 140-143).

The second relevant passage, clearly dependent on the first, is 2 Chronicles 3-4. The narrative portions of the books of Chronicles begin with the reign of David, then move on to Solomon and trace the Davidic monarchy through its history until the Babylonian exile. The Chronicler depended heavily on the books of Samuel and Kings, making changes or additions for theological or explanatory reasons (such rewriting of Biblical books for contemporary audiences was common in the Jewish world during the last few centuries BCE). The dependent nature of this source makes it fairly useless in any attempt to reconstruct the historical elements of Solomon's temple (Hurowitz, 2005, 67).

One example of a change that the Chronicler made to the Kings narrative should prove helpful. The Chronicler describes the walls of the porch (the *ûlam*) as overlaid with gold (2 Chr. 3:4), while the walls of the main room of the sanctuary (the *hêkal*) were covered with precious stones (2 Chr. 3:6). Not only does this contradict the account in the book of Kings, where the walls of the *hêkal* were covered in gold (1 Kgs. 6:22), it also reflects a clear misunderstanding of the nature of the *ûlam*. It was not an enclosed room as the Chronicler conceived of it, but rather an open porch or forecourt without any walls that could be covered with gold.

Nevertheless, the material in Chronicles is not entirely without value. One of the main problems that scholars face with the account in Kings is that because some of the obscure architectural references would have become unfamiliar to the later scribes who copied the text, these chapters suffered more textual corruption than most portions of the Hebrew Bible. As such, the text of Chronicles can often help clarify how the loss of a letter here and there or even a verse or the transposition of a few words in the copying process made the text of Kings problematic (Hurowitz, 2005, 67). It is usually fairly straightforward to separate these instances from times when the Chronicler consciously changed the text of Kings for clarification or for some theological purpose.

The third source is the description of the tabernacle found within the priestly source of the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses. The book of

Exodus, in chapters 25-31 and 35-40, describes the construction of the tabernacle, and the priestly writers based their account of the tabernacle on the temple that existed in their day sometime during the late stage of the Judean monarchy. They were interested in establishing a sense of continuity between the religious practices and beliefs of Moses and those of the Judean community during the monarchic period. There were some obvious changes that had to be made in the description to account for a mobile sanctuary (as opposed to a fixed one), but the priestly writers seem to have started with the existing temple as their model (Hurowitz, 2005, 68).

The fourth literary source for reconstructing the Solomonic temple is a vision of the prophet Ezekiel contained in chapters 40-43 of his book. Ezekiel does not claim to be describing the current temple complex but rather a future idyllic temple that the Judeans will build once they are ashamed of their sins (Ezek. 43:10-11). As with the description of the tabernacle, it would seem that Ezekiel, whose career spanned from 5 years prior to the Babylonian exile (592 BCE) to 17 years after that event (570 BCE), used the temple with which he was familiar as the starting point for his description as well. But although the Solomonic temple may have been the starting point, it is clear that the dimensions Ezekiel provides are highly schematized; like his vision where he divided the land of Israel into rectangular sections of land that completely ignored the natural rivers and mountains and valleys across the land, this vision seeks mathematical order more than a feasibly engineered structure (Hurowitz, 2005, 67-68).

Having said that, Ezekiel also provides more details about many of the aspects of the temple not even touched on in the book of Kings. Scholars become tempted to use these figures to flesh out the more sparse description provided by the Deuteronomistic Historians, but such supplemental material is always tentative.

Scholarly reconstructions of the temple differ depending on how much weight each scholar gives to a given source. In addition, visual reconstructions require scholars to fill in gaps, like the thickness of some of the walls, not provided by any of the sources. That said, here is the description of the temple contained in 1 Kings 6:

> "In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites came

out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the Lord.

2 The temple that King Solomon built for the Lord was sixty cubits long, twenty wide and thirty high. 3 The portico at the front of the main hall of the temple extended the width of the temple, that is twenty cubits, and projected ten cubits from the front of the temple. 4 He made narrow windows high up in the temple walls. 5 Against the walls of the main hall and inner sanctuary he built a structure around the building, in which there were side rooms. 6 The lowest floor was five cubits wide, the middle floor six cubits and the third floor seven. He made offset ledges around the outside of the temple so that nothing would be inserted into the temple walls.

7 In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built.

8 The entrance to the lowest floor was on the south side of the temple; a stairway led up to the middle level and from there to the third. 9 So he built the temple and completed it, roofing it with beams and cedar planks. 10 And he built the side rooms all along the temple. The height of each was five cubits, and they were attached to the temple by beams of cedar.

11 The word of the Lord came to Solomon: 12 “As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, observe my laws and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father. 13 And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel.”

14 So Solomon built the temple and completed it. 15 He lined its interior walls with cedar boards, paneling them from the floor of the temple to the ceiling, and covered the floor of the temple with planks of juniper. 16 He partitioned off twenty cubits at the rear of

the temple with cedar boards from floor to ceiling to form within the temple an inner sanctuary, the Most Holy Place. 17 The main hall in front of this room was forty cubits long. 18 The inside of the temple was cedar, carved with gourds and open flowers. Everything was cedar; no stone was to be seen.

19 He prepared the inner sanctuary within the temple to set the ark of the covenant of the Lord there. 20 The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty wide and twenty high. He overlaid the inside with pure gold, and he also overlaid the altar of cedar. 21 Solomon covered the inside of the temple with pure gold, and he extended gold chains across the front of the inner sanctuary, which was overlaid with gold. 22 So he overlaid the whole interior with gold. He also overlaid with gold the altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary.

23 For the inner sanctuary he made a pair of cherubim out of olive wood, each ten cubits high. 24 One wing of the first cherub was five cubits long, and the other wing five cubits—ten cubits from wing tip to wing tip. 25 The second cherub also measured ten cubits, for the two cherubim were identical in size and shape. 26 The height of each cherub was ten cubits. 27 He placed the cherubim inside the innermost room of the temple, with their wings spread out. The wing of one cherub touched one wall, while the wing of the other touched the other wall, and their wings touched each other in the middle of the room. 28 He overlaid the cherubim with gold.

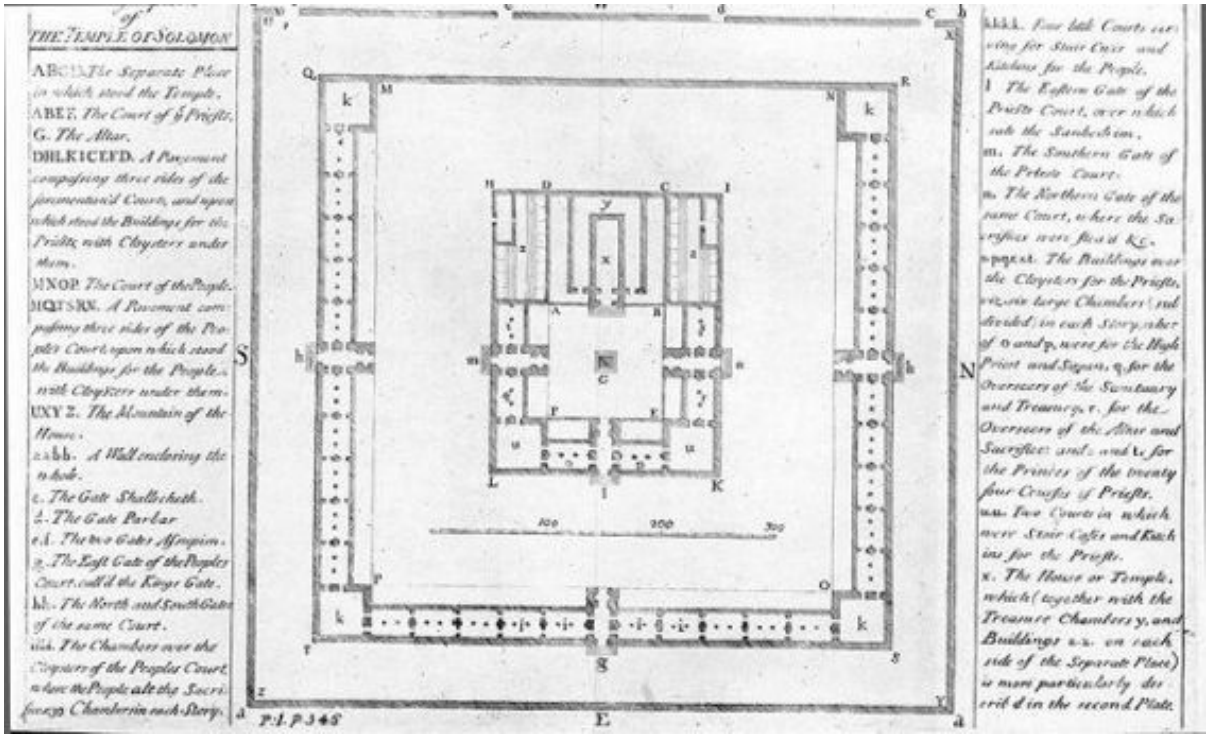
29 On the walls all around the temple, in both the inner and outer rooms, he carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers. 30 He also covered the floors of both the inner and outer rooms of the temple with gold.

31 For the entrance to the inner sanctuary he made doors out of olive wood that were one fifth of the width of the sanctuary. 32 And on the two olive-wood doors he carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers, and overlaid the cherubim and palm trees with hammered gold. 33 In the same way, for the entrance to the main

hall he made doorframes out of olive wood that were one fourth of the width of the hall. 34 He also made two doors out of juniper wood, each having two leaves that turned in sockets. 35 He carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers on them and overlaid them with gold hammered evenly over the carvings.

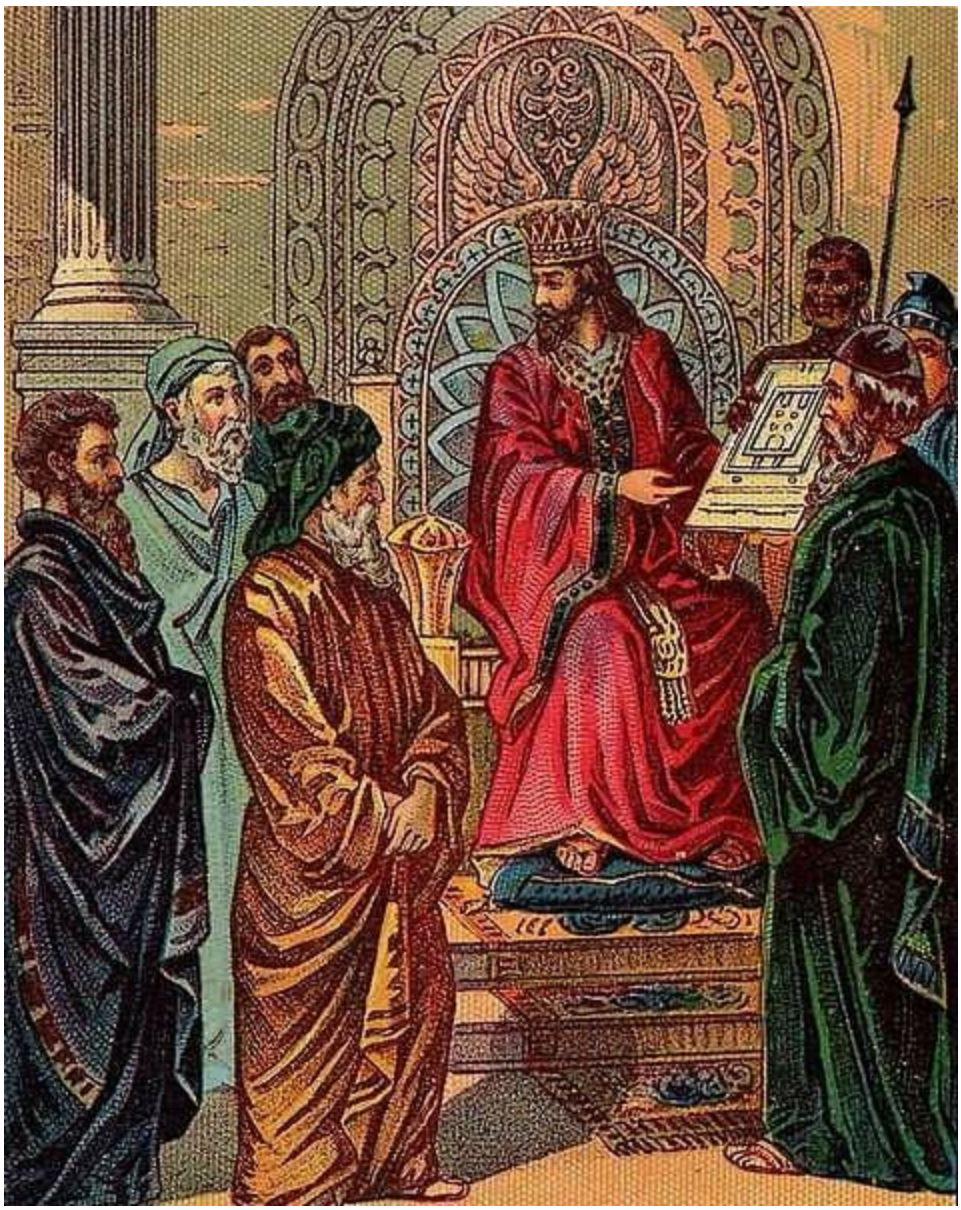
36 And he built the inner courtyard of three courses of dressed stone and one course of trimmed cedar beams.

37 The foundation of the temple of the Lord was laid in the fourth year, in the month of Ziv. 38 In the eleventh year in the month of Bul, the eighth month, the temple was finished in all its details according to its specifications. He had spent seven years building it.



Isaac Newton's model of the layout of Solomon's Temple

Constructing the Temple



A Bible card depicting King Solomon with the plans for the Temple

Constructing such a prominent architectural feature in a region unaccustomed to building such large edifices was no small feat. The royal administration had to select the site, come up with the funds and financing to back such an operation, hire architects capable of designing blueprints for the structure, and then organize a skilled labor force that could carry out the

plans.

To even begin to consider building a large and lavish temple such as the one in Jerusalem, the first hurdle facing the administration would be finding a source for the funds required for such a construction project. Most recent scholars take the position that the descriptions of the amount of gold, ivory, and costly wood adorning the temple simply results from "exuberant imagination". British scholar, Alan Millard (1981, 5-18), however, has made a thorough study of the use of gold and wealth in general in the ancient Near East, and his conclusions were that the descriptions of Solomon's wealth and that of the temple are entirely in keeping with the use and accumulation of wealth in ancient times. He wrote, "There are no grounds for dismissing Solomon's glory as exaggeration or legend in the history and culture of the ancient world. Solomon could well have ruled in Jerusalem exactly as 1 Kings describes him, seated on his ivory throne, worshipping at the golden Temple." (Millard, 1981, 17).

In addition to the vast wealth revealed in archaeological excavations that the kings of such powerful kingdoms as Babylonia and Egypt exhibited, there is further archaeological evidence of similar extravagance in the ancient cities within modern Syria and Lebanon, much closer to Israel in both geography and international prominence (or the lack thereof). This wealth was especially exhibited in religious shrines that archaeologists have unearthed, but the practice of looting was just as common in ancient times as in modern times, so there is no reason to suspect that archaeological finds can in any way approximate the wealth of these ancient kingdoms.

The extant literary texts from these ancient kingdoms, especially the administrative texts which would have no reason to exaggerate, are much better benchmarks for estimating the amount of gold and other precious materials they kept on hand. However, even these figures only allow for the possibility that Solomon outfitted the temple with such extraordinary amounts of gold, ivory, and costly woods. Much more telling is Millard's analysis of the wealth of an Egyptian Pharaoh named Orsokon (924-889 BCE). This king was the successor to Sheshonq I (945-924 BCE), known in the Hebrew Bible as Shishak, who sacked the temple of Solomon. This event surely has historical credibility as it is referenced both in Biblical (1 Kgs.

14:25) and Egyptian sources (an inscription on the wall of the temple at Karnak), and what both Millard and the archaeologist Kenneth Kitchen observed was a dramatic increase in the wealth of Sheshonq I after he plundered the Jerusalem treasuries and temple. They also noted the incredible wealth of Orsokon, who did not engage in any known military expeditions that would help explain his vast wealth (Millard, 1981, 16). The logical conclusion that both of these scholars reached is that this sudden increase in wealth resulted from the plundering of Jerusalem's riches carried out by Sheshonq I.

The next question is where and how Solomon would have acquired such vast wealth. Although his father David had acquired considerable wealth during his reign, the descriptions of the wealth in Solomon's Israel far exceed that of his father. One of the obvious means that Solomon filled his coffers was by imposing taxes on his subjects, and though the text of Kings does not report any taxes levied by the kings of Israel or Judah, an earlier prophetic text clearly indicates that the Israelite and Judean kings exacted taxes from their people. The leaders of Israel and Judah approach Samuel noting that he is old and near death, but that his two sons whom he has appointed as successors are quite unpopular with the leaders and the masses (1 Sam. 8:1-5). They therefore request that Samuel appoint a king for them as other nations around them have (1 Sam 8:5). YHWH was offended by this request but reassured Samuel that his displeasure was in no way directed at Samuel, and as a prophet of YHWH, Samuel then delivered the following divine oracle to the leaders of Israel and Judah: "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. He will take one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers. He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle and donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because

of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but YHWH will not answer you in that day." (1 Sam. 8:11-18, NRSV)

In addition to the reference to conscripted labor that is mentioned directly in the text of Kings, this prophecy makes clear that the kings of Israel and Judah, including Solomon, implemented a system of taxes, but the in this relatively poor kingdom would not account for the amount of gold with which the temple was outfitted.

According to the text of Kings, Solomon acquired the majority of his wealth by mining the natural resources available in and around his kingdom (1 Kgs. 10:11; 22:48), and Millard calculated in modern the amounts of gold Solomon received from various sources. As a gift from the kingdom of Sheba, he received 3.9 tons of gold and received the same from the kingdom of Tyre, but these gifts paled in comparison to the amount of gold Solomon excavated from his mining operations in Ophir, which amounted to 13.6 tons, just in the few years preceding the construction of the temple. Although these figures appear unbelievable today, the Egyptian Pharaoh Orsokon dedicated 205 tons of gold and silver to his gods, and the kings of Persia calculated there were 1,178 tons of gold in their outlying region of Susa (Millard, 1981, 18).

The text of Chronicles tells a different story. According to the Chronicler, it was David who provided the financing for the temple when he commanded his son Solomon to build it (1 Chr. 29:1-9). David even provided Solomon all of the material resources he would need for the building project.

The next obstacle facing the administration would be the organization of a labor force sufficient to complete such a monumental construction project. As alluded to earlier, Solomon likely conscripted a labor force as an alternative to paying the king's annual taxes (1 Sam. 8:11-18). Some of the labor force was put to work in the gold mines, while others were tasked with royal building projects such as the palace, the temple, and various city gates throughout the nation. Again, the Chronicler credited David with supplying the necessary labor force. (1 Chr. 28:21).

This conscripted labor force provided the massive numbers of unskilled laborers for these building projects, but Solomon and his administration still

needed skilled architects who could design the temple with input from the king. This skilled labor force was not available in Israel because there had been very little call for such specialized labor in the region, so Solomon and his administration outsourced the skilled labor to Phoenician architects from the city of Tyre (1 Kgs. 7:13-14). He relied on the skills of these architects both for his palace and for the temple of YHWH. The Chronicler appeals to a higher power, stating that God revealed to David the plans for the temple in a prophetic vision or oracle and these divine plans are what David passed on to Solomon (1 Chr. 28:11-19).

Selecting the Site

A modern view of the Temple Mount taken by Andrew Shiva.

The city of Jerusalem was around long before David captured it from the control of the Jebusites, and Egyptian execration texts (long listings of the Pharaoh's enemies) contain references to Jerusalem as early as the 19th century BCE. There is no question that these Jebusite/Canaanite inhabitants had their own cultic traditions and worshipped their own deities, but what is somewhat unclear is the extent to which David and Solomon adopted and integrated these earlier Canaanite traditions into the religious traditions that they established in the Jerusalem temple.

According to some scholars, there was a great deal of borrowing and integration. The Canaanites in Jerusalem worshipped gods like Shalem (contained in the city's name) and El Elyon described in Genesis 14:18-20,

where the reference to Salem is likely a thinly veiled reference to Jerusalem. There is also the god Zedek (also spelled Zedeq) contained in the name Melchizedek in Genesis 14, as well as in the name of Zadok, the priest who suddenly appears as a priest for David with no reported genealogy. Rowley (1939) theorized that Zadok was likely the Jebusite priest of the existing Canaanite sanctuary in Jerusalem and that David procured his services to act as a priest of YHWH under the new administration.

Rupprecht (1977) went further in arguing that Solomon built his temple on the very site of the previous Jebusite temple, and there are two texts that help support Rupprecht's theory. The first suggests the presence of a temple in Jerusalem during David's reign. After Nathan confronts David regarding his affair with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah, the child born from his illicit affair with Bathsheba dies. David, who had been grieving and mourning while his child was sick, washed and shaved and put on clean clothes and went to worship in the temple (2 Sam. 12:20). The narrative makes clear that all of this activity took place while David was at his palace in Jerusalem. According to Rupprecht, the temple that David entered to offer his sacrifices and worship was not a temple of YHWH but rather a Jebusite temple to one of their gods.

The second text makes a connection between the site of the Jerusalem temple and a prior cultic site known as the threshing floor of Ornan/Arauna the Jebusite (1 Chr. 21). David buys this threshing floor in order to build an altar to YHWH, whereupon he may sacrifice in order to avert the plague decimating his people. From the perspective of literary history, the authors of Chronicles are writing much later than the authors of the Deuteronomistic History and are that much further removed from the events about which they write. To address this fact, Rupprecht argues that the Chronicler had access to an old tradition that was either not available to the Deuteronomistic Historians or suppressed by them.

In addition to these textual clues, it is also difficult to imagine that the Jebusite inhabitants would not have used the prominent hilltop in the heart of the city that forms the Temple Mount as a cultic installation. Various texts throughout the Hebrew Bible make clear that Solomon located the temple at the very top of the temple mount, above his royal palace, and since traditional

Canaanite and Israelite practice was to locate the place of worship on the very tops of hills, this would support the idea that that the Jerusalem temple of YHWH shared its location with the previous Jebusite cultic high place or temple.

The Biblical text clearly makes no reference to any previous cultic activities at the site where David placed the ark that became the site of the Solomonic temple, so if the Yahwistic Judeans who claimed Jerusalem wanted to establish some discontinuity between themselves and the practices of the previous inhabitants of the city, a fresh cultic site would be one way to do that. Furthermore, although it was common practice for worshippers in the ancient Near East to keep one site as the sacred space for the deity over the course of generations and centuries, the practice of simply switching name-tags for the deity worshipped at a particular site is rather rare.

The later tradition of the Chronicler in the Second Temple Period tries to identify the site of the Solomonic temple from a more theological perspective. The Chronicler found such a theological connection in the story of the binding of Isaac, known as the *Aqedah* in the Jewish tradition. The story of Abraham being commanded by YHWH to sacrifice his only son and following through on the command until he was stopped at the very last moment (Gen 22) is one of the most revered texts in both the Jewish and Christian traditions. Nevertheless, it is worth exploring why the Chronicler would feel the need to make this connection, which does not appear in the Deuteronomistic History that constituted the chronicler's source material.

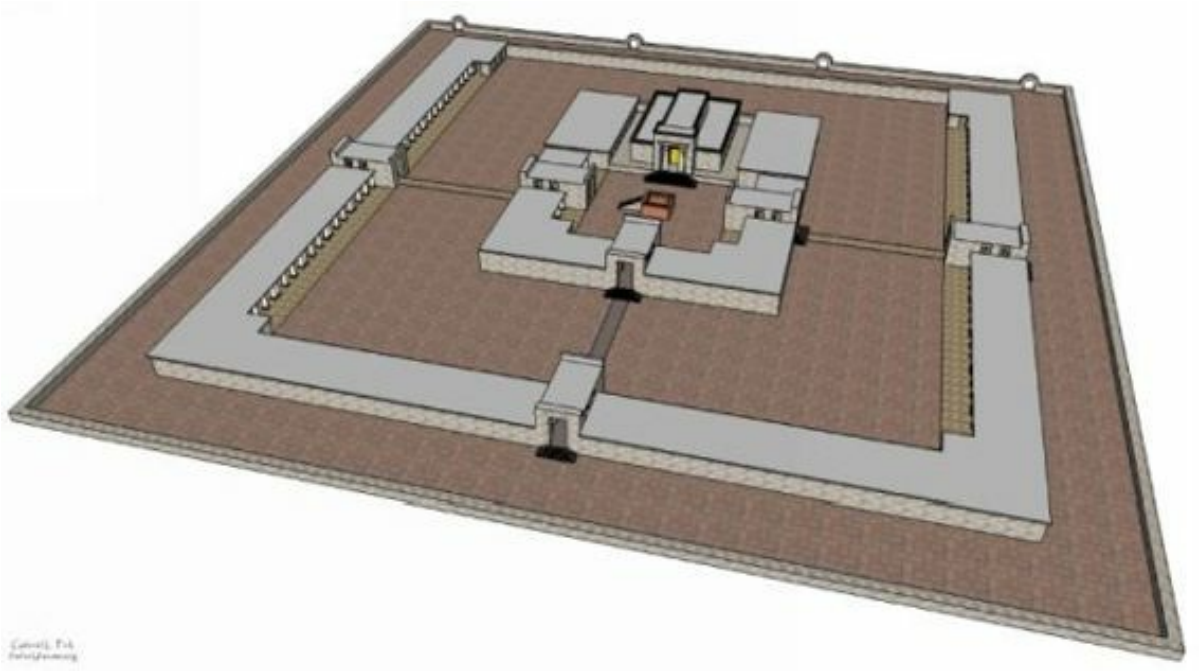
The priestly strand of the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomist had already made strong connections between the religious traditions established by Moses and the worship at the temple. Between the detailed priestly descriptions of all the standard priestly offerings and attire and the frequent Deuteronomic references to legitimate worship only taking place at "the place that YHWH will choose", a strong connection between the Mosaic religious traditions and the monarchic religious traditions had already been established. However, there remained a sense of discontinuity between the patriarchal religious traditions and the monarchic religious traditions, and modern scholars have frequently noted this discontinuity. Of course, this observation was certainly not unique or new to modern Biblical scholars; it was evident to

the early Jewish and Christian interpreters and was likely noticed by the Chronicler as well. This observation provided the impetus for the Chronicler to both highlight and in some cases supply as many connections as possible.

The Chronicler found such a theological connection through vague references within the Aqedah. In Genesis 22, the destination YHWH provides to Abraham for his sacrifice is one of the heights in the land of Moriah, but the Biblical writers do not specify where the land of Moriah was located. This ambiguity provided the Chronicler the wiggle room he needed for establishing a theological connection. The land of Moriah must have been Judah, and the "height" where Abraham ascended to offer his son was none other than the Temple Mount, which the Chronicler coined "Mount Moriah" (2 Chr. 3:1). This geographic identification of an otherwise unspecified location served to connect the Patriarchal tradition with the religious traditions of the Solomonic temple (Kalimi, 1990, 345-350).

The fact that this identification is secondary appears not only from the literary evidence but also from the geographical landscape itself. Archaeologist Nelson Glueck (1959, 60) highlighted the fact that Abraham would not have needed to carry a supply of kindling with him on his journey if he was to perform his sacrifice in the wooded hills of Judah, as there would have been ample supplies of such material close at hand. In light of this fact and the other clues in the context, Glueck suggested the Sinai as the probable location of the "land of Moriah". Regardless of whatever the intended reference for the "land of Moriah" actually was in the account in Genesis, it was not likely the temple mount, and the notion that the Deuteronomistic historians could have overlooked such an important theological explanation is unconscionable.

Temple Structure and Layout



A three dimensional model of Solomon's Temple made by Gabriel Fink

Before discussing the interpretations of the purposes of each area of the temple, it is important to understand the layout from an architectural perspective, and unfortunately, this task is more difficult than people might initially think. Since there is no archaeological information about the Solomonic temple, the only sources for its architectural features are the Biblical texts, but the writers who describe the physical aspects of the temple used technical language that was not even understood by the scribes who copied these texts. This lack of understanding of the terminology led to many more transmission errors than appear in most of the Biblical texts, and furthermore, many of the specifications that one would want for a reconstruction are absent because the writers were more concerned about the theological aspects of the temple than with its architectural design. Although Ezekiel provides the thickness of the exterior walls, there is no indication of the size of the interior walls or of the ceiling and roof. Thus, it has fallen on scholars to take the information provided in the literary sources and turn it into a cohesive picture.

The temple was a long rectangular structure with an additional set of side rooms three stories high wrapped around three sides of it. The exterior of the temple measured 100 cubits (165 feet) in length by 50 cubits (84½ feet) in width (Ezek. 41:13-14). The exterior walls measured 6 cubits with side rooms around the entire temple measuring 4 cubits wide (Ezek. 41:5). Taking these dimensions, since the main interior portion ("nave") of the temple measured 20 cubits wide and the side rooms combined with the exterior walls measured 10 cubits each, this would leave interior walls measuring 5 cubits wide separating the main section from the side rooms. These thick interior walls grew thinner each floor up so that the rooms on the third floor were the largest, and interior stairs led from one level of these side rooms to the next. Waterman has reconstructed the consonantal text of Ezek. 41:7 with the aid of the Septuagint translation as follows: "The side chambers increased in width as they rose upward. Upon a base like an extension or addition to the wall of the house was a stairway (with its) width toward the house, extending upward on this side and on that side of the house." (Waterman, 1943, 289). One additional curious fact about these side rooms is that they were windowless.

The accounts in the books of Kings and Chronicles indicate that the nave was 60 cubits long, 20 cubits wide and 30 cubits high, while the Septuagint (the Greek translation) said it was 25 cubits high. (1 Kgs. 6:2; 2 Chr. 3:3). This main part of the sanctuary was further divided into three parts.

When one ascended from the courtyard to the nave, they found themselves on a porch between two large pillars. These pillars were impressive pieces of architectural engineering, consisting of golden bases, brass shafts, and topped by capitals resembling lilies. From this porch, one entered the temple through the main entrance on the short side of the temple that faced east and found themselves in the *ûlam*, which roughly translates to "front room". This vestibule was 10 cubits deep. From the *ûlam*, the individuals entering the facility moved through two doors each made of a single board of cypress wood that was plated with gold and engraved with *cherubîm* and floral patterns. The frames of these doors were made of oil wood, and through these doors one entered into the *hêkal*, which was 40 cubits long. This main part of the facility gave its name to the entire complex. The floors were made of cypress and the ceiling was made of cedar. There were small windows at

the top of this room on the sidewalls located above the three-story side rooms. The room had gold-plated cedar paneled walls decorated with reliefs depicting winged cherubim and exotic trees (1 Kgs. 6:22).

At the end of this room stood an architecturally separate space, known as the *debîr*, roughly translated as "back room" or "rear part". The dimensions of this back room formed a cube 20 x 20 x 20 cubits, which indicates that the *debîr* was somewhere between 5 and 10 cubits shorter than the *hêkal*. Three explanations have been advanced to account for this discrepancy in height. The first suggestion is that the roof of the temple was fashioned like that of Egyptian temples and sloped down at an angle so that the ceiling progressively lowered from 30 to 20 cubits (Vincent, 1956, fig. 112). In support of this suggestion is the divergent Septuagint figure of 25 cubits that would then indicate the average height of the room as opposed to its highest point. Arguing against this position is the continual reference to the northern Phoenician influence on the building activity for this structure, as opposed to a southern Egyptian influence. A second possibility is that the upper chambers mentioned in 2 Chr. 3:9 were situated directly above the *debîr* (Davey, 1980, 109), but the easiest explanation for this suggestion is that it was the Chronicler's means of explaining the height discrepancy. The third possibility is that the *debîr* was elevated on a platform and was accessed by ascending a flight of stairs (Garber, 1951, 2-24). Support for this argument lies in the description of the floors. The main part of the structure, the *hêkal*, had cypress wood flooring, while the *debîr* had cedar wood flooring. The best explanation for such a transition in flooring material is that the floor of the *debîr* was raised on a platform, but that would seem to go directly against a Mosaic stipulation: "You shall not go up by steps to my altar, so that your nakedness may not be exposed on it" (Ex. 20:26, NRSV). That said, a simple change from steps to a ramp would easily solve this problem.

Another model made by Gabriel Fink

The foundations of the building were laid with hewn (cut) stone, but the stone used for the entire structure atop the foundations contained only unhewn stone. The reason for this seemingly odd choice of building material goes back to an ancient law given by YHWH through Moses to the Israelites. The law reads as follows: "But if you make for me an altar of stone, do not build it of hewn stones; for if you use a chisel upon it you profane it" (Ex. 20:25, NRSV; see also Deut 27:5-6 and Josh. 8:30-31). In what would later become the classic Rabbinic style of "placing a fence around the Torah" so as not to come close to transgressing the it, Solomon didn't take any chances and made sure the entire structure conformed to this legal requirement.

"To the right and to the left" (1 Kgs. 7:21) of the porch (ûlam) of the building stood two imposing pillars or columns 18 cubits high and 12 cubits in circumference. According to the prophet Jeremiah, these pillars were hollow (Jer. 52:21), and these pillars even had names: Jachin (pronounced yakeen) and Boaz. Based on archaeological parallels in the region, scholars have drawn several conclusions about these pillars. Most scholars now believe that these two pillars were not supporting the roof of the porch (*ûlam*) but were freestanding off to the side of the porch itself. If they had been under the ceiling of the porch, they would have taken up one-third of it. At

the base of each pillar was likely a bronze plaque with an engraved inscription, and if this inference is correct, the most likely reason the Duteronomistic Historians did not mention such plaques was because they were removed when the temple was looted. Scott (1939, 148) speculated that the southern pillar contained something like, "He (YHWH) will establish the throne of David, and his kingdom to his seed forever", reminiscent of Ps. 9:8; 93:2; and 103:19, where the inscription began with the Hebrew word *yachîn*. Scott (1939, 148-49) makes a similar suggestion about the possible wording on the plaque of the northern pillar, which may have read, "In the strength of YHWH the king shall rejoice", reminiscent of Ps. 21:2. When Scott proposed this interpretation, he was apparently unaware of an Akkadian text from Tukilti Ninurta I, who dedicated several wooden pillars. This Akkadian text describes pillars, their capitals, their dimensions, and their inscribed royal dedicatory inscriptions (Hurowitz, 2005, 83-84).

A large bronze altar stood in the court in front of the entrance to the building, and this was also known as the great altar where Solomon performed his sacrifice for the dedication of the temple. It is curious that this altar was not mentioned in 1 Kings 7, where the reader would expect to find it. Hurowitz (2005, 67) suggests that this is one case where Chronicles has preserved an element originally contained in the book of Kings that was lost in the scribal transmission process.

In addition to this altar, there stood a massive round, bronze water container called "the Sea". This container had a diameter the size of the depth of the *ûlam* (10 cubits) and stood 5 cubits high. An interesting note for those geometrically inclined is that the detailed measurements of the basin are impossible, not deriving from actual measurements but from calculating the circumference based on $\pi = 3$ as opposed to 3.14 (Hollenback, 1998, 409-12). Many English translations render the name of this object the "molten sea" or the "cast metal sea" (1 Kgs. 7:23; 2 Chr. 4:2), but Kang (2008, 101) suggests that this is a mistranslation and that the phrase should be rendered, "The Sea has been constrained." This would then be a symbolic reminder of time immemorial during the creation when YHWH defeated the Red Sea by splitting it in two.

There were also 10 smaller wagon-shaped vehicles with an even smaller

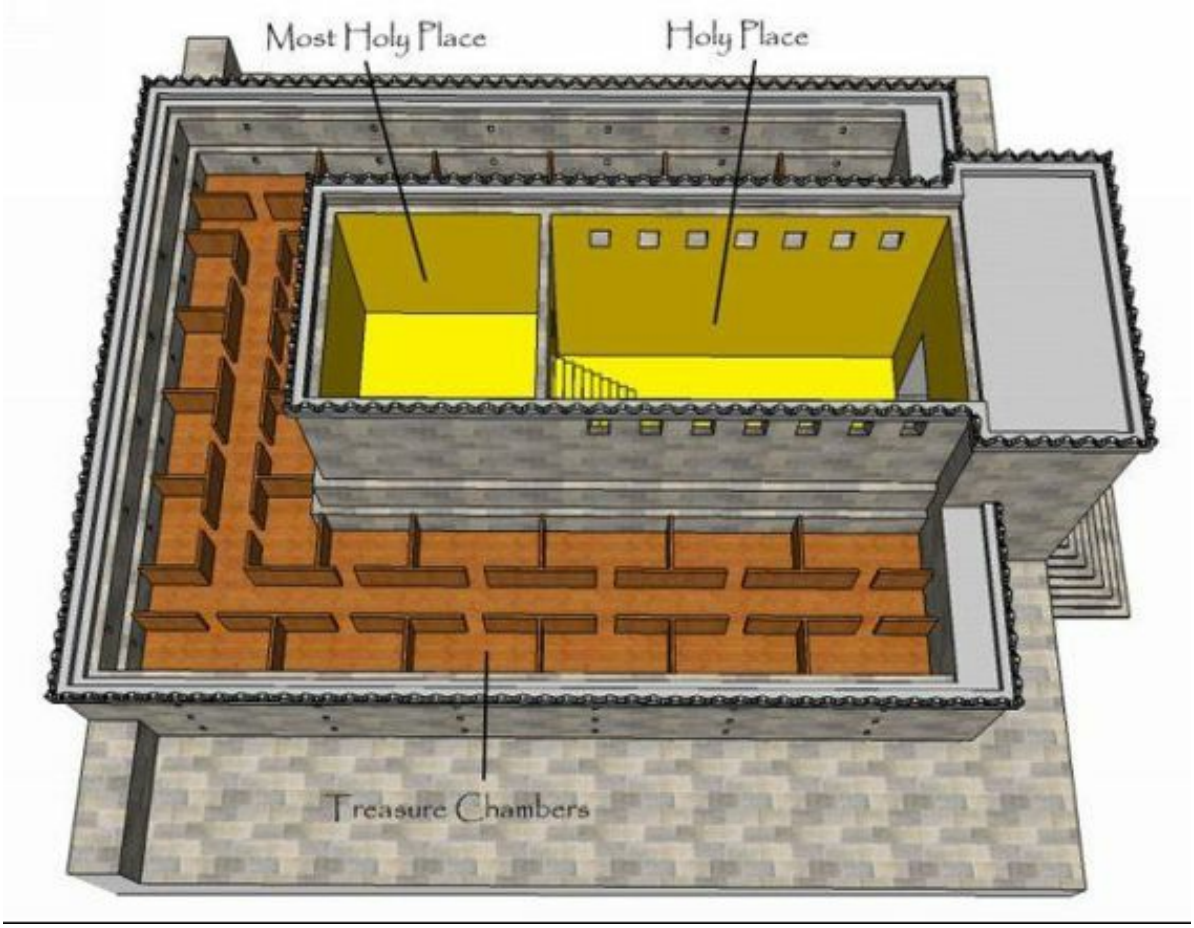
water vessel atop each of them (1 Kgs. 7:27-39), and they stood in parallel rows of five wagons on each side leading up to the temple. Although the text of Kings describes these vehicles in great detail, it is quite difficult to follow because there are at least nine Hebrew terms that only appear in this passage, so the English translations are tentative. Fortunately, however, archaeology has come to the rescue in this matter by providing multiple excavated implements from the region that parallel the textual description.

Temple or Treasury?

While there is little reason to question Solomon's role in the construction of the temple, there may be good reason to question the original role of the temple in the Judean administration. Most scholars and commentators focus almost exclusively on the main portion of the temple, thus excluding its many side rooms that ascend a full three stories up. Although the text of 1 Kgs. 6:6 suggests that these side rooms were separate from the temple proper, verse 10 uses a verb that makes clear that it was part of the structure itself, and all of the reconstructions of the temple have represented these rooms as part of the structure itself. In addition, the side rooms and the nave (temple proper) were built upon a single raised platform.

During World War II, Waterman (1943) highlighted this fact and proposed an interesting theory regarding the original purpose of this structure. He suggested that the Solomonic temple was not originally a temple at all but actually a treasury building for the administration. According to this theory, it was only later in Judean history that this treasury building was converted into use as a temple.

There are several factors that make this hypothesis alluring. Waterman notes that the Biblical writers ascribe no religious function whatsoever to these side rooms, but that their function is fairly transparent. Since these rooms have no windows and are divided into many small sections, these side rooms were most likely treasure vaults, and the "treasuries of the house of YHWH" are mentioned throughout the book of Kings without any negative criticism. He also points out that the square footage of these treasury vaults would have been more than twice the square footage allotted to the nave. The complex layout of these side rooms, divided into a type of maze of many smaller rooms, would have added to their security by making it more difficult for any would-be thieves to easily access the treasures.



A model of the interior's layout made by Gabriel Fink

Another point that Waterman makes regards the nomenclature used for the nave, which something the Deuteronomistic Historians placed their focus on. Most scholars are in agreement that the original terms applied to the portions of the nave were not religious in nature at all but simply indicated front room (*ulam*), palace or large structure (*hêkal*), and back room (*debîr*). There is also the elaborate decoration of the nave, because such elaborate decoration, while appropriate for a temple, might be considered ill suited for a treasury building. However, that would only be the case if the treasury building were more of a functional building only accessed by the king and his administrators. On the other hand, if this facility served as a prestige symbol that would be displayed to foreign dignitaries, the lavish decorations and adornments would make perfect sense.

One of the most interesting aspects of Waterman's theory is his explanation of the contents of the *debîr*. According to the Bible, this housed the *cherubîm*

and the Ark of the Covenant, and there is no reason to think that these items were secondarily placed in the *debîr*. Waterman argues that the *cherubîm* could not have represented the presence of YHWH anymore than the *cherubîm* guarding the Garden of Eden would have done so. He also notes that the outstretched wings of the *cherubîm* are not (in the earliest traditions) arranged in a manner to protect or cover the Ark of the Covenant but outstretched spanning the entire width of the *debîr* as if these creatures were ready to take off in flight. Raised on the platform of the debîr, these creatures, along with the Ark of the Covenant, would take center stage for the visiting dignitaries.

The completely separate nature of these *cherubîm* from the Ark of the Covenant is made evident by the differences between their description in the books of Kings and Chronicles and the quite different description in the book of Exodus. Here the priestly writers felt compelled to include the *cherubîm* in their description of the tabernacle in order to maintain continuity between the tabernacle and the temple, but in the case of the tabernacle, two large gold-covered *cherubîm* could hardly have been hauled around the wilderness by the Israelites during their wanderings. Therefore, the priestly writers shrunk them and incorporated them as part of the cover (sometimes incorrectly translated as "mercy seat") of the Ark (Ex. 25:18). They further changed the direction the *cherubîm* faced by turning them inwards to face each other and the Ark itself. Their wings were no longer outstretched for flight but now pointed inwards, covering the Ark.

Waterman also argues that the thin wood partition that separated the *debîr* from the *hêkal* was a secondary addition to the structure, and the Deuteronomistic Historians' account in Kings provides some literary support for this position. The description of the separation between the *hêkal* and the *debîr* is not that of a partition but of a gold chain draped across the front (1 Kgs. 6:21). This would be comparable to the velvet ropes separating museum-goers from the exhibits they have come to admire. In the same manner, this chain would provide a sense of separation between the two areas without blocking any view of the *cherubîm* and Ark. In plain view, these colossal *cherubîm,* covered in bright gold and elevated on a platform, would have been the focus of attention of anyone entering the room, and in keeping with the function of the *cherubîm* set to guard the Garden of Eden, Waterman

argues that the *cherubîm* in the *debîr*/*hêkal* were set to symbolically guard the treasuries. Their posture was such that they could take off into flight to attack any would be thief or intruder.

In proposing his theory, Waterman thought that the location of the Ark within this treasury building had to be a later development because of the religious character of the Ark, but the fact that the Ark only later became an object to be worshipped and had to be hidden from view of all but the high priest would coincide well with Waterman's proposal. Although Waterman does not draw this inference himself, the Ark of the Covenant's location within this building, even if situated behind the *cherubîm*, would have been one of Israel's most valued treasures and one of the few on display for distinguished visitors to the great hall. This would accord with one of the earliest conceptualizations of the Ark as a holy relic.

Furthermore, if the *debîr* were on a raised platform as one of the primary interpretations of the height discrepancy suggests, Waterman's suggestion would help explain why Solomon did not consider the stairs a problem. The debîr, although it contained the Ark of the Covenant, was not considered an altar or an object of worship itself, so the stairs would not have been problematic. Such an interpretation would also explain why the Deuteronomistic Historians provided no explanation for the height discrepancy; they had suppressed the information about the stairs and the raised platform because it was theologically embarrassing and problematic.

The final religious apparatus that Waterman must explain is the large altar in the courtyard in front of the temple. It was clear to Waterman that this altar was ancient and had a long history and could not simply be dismissed as a later addition to the courtyard and overall complex, but in this case he argues that the Deuteronomistic Historians went to great lengths to explain Solomon's unexpected behavior during the "temple" dedication. Rather than offering the sacrifices on the golden altar "before YHWH", which was a later addition that was located inside the temple itself, Solomon offered his sacrifices at the large altar in the courtyard. The Deuteronomistic Historians explain this as being due to the smaller size of the altar within the temple, but that reads as a poor explanation for an otherwise unconventional phenomenon.

The only altar originally within the temple was an incense altar, and though incense was certainly used in religious rituals, it was often used throughout the region for non-religious purposes as well. People in Jerusalem would burn incense at large parties, banquets, and processions, so having a permanent apparatus on which to burn incense in such a prominent facility that entertained visiting dignitaries would be entirely consistent with general practices in the region.

Another theological source of embarrassment was the proximity of the temple to the palace. In fact, the temple and the palace were so close that their respective inner courts shared a wall, and in one of Ezekiel's prophetic oracles, YHWH chastises the people of Israel for this issue of proximity: "The house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they nor their kings…When they placed their threshold by my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them…" (Ezek. 43:7-8).

Again, although Waterman did not make the connections, more recent studies on the other courtyard implements also suggest that they were more intended for royal ceremonies than for distinctly religious ones. The pillars Jachîn and Boaz, which stood on either side of the porch, were an essential part of royal ceremonies according to the text of Kings, and after the construction of the temple, the pillars only appear in two contexts. The first is the coronation of Jehoash (2 Kgs. 11:12-14), and the second is the covenant-making ceremony led by Josiah (2 Kgs. 23:1-3). Similarly, the text of Kings provides no clues whatsoever as to the function of the "Sea has been Constrained", and the suggestions by various scholars of distinctly religious uses, such as its function as a bathing vessel for the priests, comparable to an outdoor swimming pool accessed by a ladder, seem highly unlikely given its dimensions and its open air location (Hurowitz, 2005, 79). Kang's suggestion, on the other hand, that this basin formed a prominent part of the Israelite New Year's festival, which celebrated YHWH's role in creation, would make it a part of a royal ceremony. Finally, if the smaller water vessels contained in the wagons parallel similar water containers used in Mesopotamian cultic rituals (*egubbû*), they would have been used to consecrate the buildings, another royal function.

Waterman does not think that the treasury function of this administrative building lasted for a long time, as he dated the transformation of the facility from a treasury building to a temple to the reign of Rehoboam, Solomon's son. According to the Deuteronomistic Historians, the Egyptian Pharaoh Shishak ransacked and looted the treasuries of the temple that had accumulated during Solomon's reign, leaving nothing of value (1 Kgs. 14:26), and this was also the tumultuous period in Israelite history when the united kingdom of Israel and Judah split into two separate kingdoms. When this happened, virtually all of the ancient Yahwistic religious sanctuaries were confined to the northern kingdom of Israel. Moreover, the southern kingdom's wealth, now greatly diminished, no longer required an entirely separate structure in which to store it. The kingdom's accumulated wealth now fit into several rooms of the palace, which would have been converted to treasuries and would have left an empty building in a prominent position in the palace complex. The fact that the Ark of the Covenant had been housed in this building along with evolving religious conceptions about the Ark would have made the choice to convert the building into a temple a logical step.

While they are certainly compelling, Waterman's theories have been rejected by virtually all of the later Biblical scholars who have studied the Solomonic temple. Nevertheless, his theory helps to explain several features of the structure that are much more difficult to explain otherwise.

Whether or not the Jerusalem temple spent a short period of time as a treasury building, for most of Judah's history it served as the primary sanctuary for the worship of YHWH. The problem Rehoboam's administration would have faced involved the theft of both the massive *cherubîm* and the Ark of the Covenant from the treasury building. Since the looting of the building is historically reliable, it would strain credulity to think that such valuable pieces as the *cherubîm* and the Ark would have been left untouched, so Rehoboam's administration would need to build a new Ark and a new set of *cherubîm*. This historical situation provides a possible explanation for the discrepancy between the *cherubîm* in the temple and the *cherubîm* in the Tabernacle.

If the royal administration made the decision to convert the treasury into a

temple, they had to separate the back room, which had now become the shrine, from the main room. They accomplished this by adding a partition separating the *debîr* from the *hêkal*, which would serve to seal off the inner shrine from the view of any visitors to the *hêkal*. A double oil-wood door was then added to this partition, maintaining continuity with the double doors at the entrance to the *hêkal*, but at this point, the shrine was now empty. Tasked with making a new Ark and new *cherubîm*, Rehoboam's administration was on a much tighter budget than Solomon's. Had they built the *cherubîm* just as they appeared in Solomon's day, these massive sculptures would have overwhelmed the smaller space and would have been difficult to see with their faces now close to the new partition. In an effort both to cut down on expenses and prevent the *cherubîm* from overshadowing the small shrine room, they decided to craft the *cherubîm* on top of the cover of the Ark as an integral part of its decoration.

The majority of the population, who had heard stories of the massive *cherubîm* surrounding the Ark, may have had no idea about the design change, which would explain why the Deuteronomistic Historians and Ezekiel described the original design of the *cherubîm*. However, the priestly writers of the Pentateuch, who described the Ark within the Tabernacle, had direct access to the Ark, so that might be why only the priestly writers described the smaller *cherubîm* incorporated into the cover of the Ark. This seclusion of the Ark and the *cherubîm* led to a new designation of the *debîr* as the "holy of holies".

The golden incense altar was likely a part of the *hêkal* since its construction, but in the religious transformation of the facility, it began to be used for burning incense continually before YHWH. Smaller implements, known as spoons and fire-pans, worked in conjunction with this incense altar (Num. 7:14; Lev. 10:1). This is the only altar mentioned in the account of the temple building in Kings, but other texts indicate that there was another bronze altar within the temple used for sacrifices. When King Ahaz visited Damascus, he fell in love with their altar and just had to have one just like it, so he obtained a scale model of their altar and sent it to the priest, Uriah, in the Jerusalem temple (1 Kgs. 16:10). When he installed his new altar, he must move the bronze altar out of the way (1 Kgs. 16:14), so he instructed Uriah to make several offerings on the "great altar" in the courtyard and

reserve the bronze altar for divination (1 Kgs. 16:15). Such divination requires sacrifice, and the explanation during the dedication ceremony as to why Solomon did not use the bronze altar also assumes that it was used as a sacrificial altar (1 Kgs. 8:64). The absence of this altar in the construction description suggests that it was installed later.

Joining these altars in the *hêkal* was a table for bread and drink offerings and 10 lamp stands. Vessels for holding drink offerings were located on the table (Ex. 25:29), as were musical instruments for the temple musicians (1 Kgs. 7:50), but other scholars identify these not as musical instruments but as "snuffers" or "shears" for the lamp stands). The lamp stands contained individual lamps, as well as a set of implements called "flowers" and tongs (Ex. 25:37-38). In addition to these, the priests also carried keys for the door to the *hêkal* and the door to the "holy of holies" (1 Kgs. 7:50); most scholars identify these as "door sockets", but such an architectural feature seems out place among this list of smaller, mobile priestly instruments. All of these priestly instruments were made of gold (Hurowitz, 2005, 84-85).

Close Archaeological Parallels to the Solomonic Temple

Due to various religious and political factors in modern-day Jerusalem, the Solomonic temple has never been excavated and is not likely to be excavated any time soon. This situation is certainly not unique to the Temple Mount and is actually quite common to most ancient sites located in the heart of a densely populated modern city. However, even though there is no direct evidence for the Solomonic temple, there are parallel religious structures that have been excavated in Syria, where the Phoenician builders would have been located, and there are two structures that archaeologists and Biblical scholars have identified as the closest parallels to the literary descriptions of the Solomonic temple.

The first was a small temple adjacent to a large palace excavated in Tell Tainat by the University of Chicago in the 1930's. It was built in the 8th century BCE, two centuries later than the Solomonic temple, and it parallels the description of the Solomonic temple in its tripartite division of the structure: a front entryway, a large main section, and a partitioned rear section.

The second parallel to the Solomonic temple is Ain Dara, which was excavated in the 1980's. Unlike the temple annex at Tell Tainat, this temple antedates the Solomonic temple by several centuries, built around 1300 BCE. Many scholars have described this temple as a tripartite structure on a single axis (as opposed to the bent axis temple, which was a much more popular temple style at the time), and another interesting feature of this temple is a series of chambers that surround the temple on three sides, which would seem to provide a direct parallel to the side rooms of the Solomonic temple.

In the case of Ain Dara, however, the portico (comparable to the *ûlam* of the Solomonic temple) is followed by a sizeable antechamber, then the main hall, and followed by the shrine area. The three parts of this temple do not include the portico, whereas the three parts of the Solomonic temple and Tell Tainat do include the portico. Counted in this way, the Ain Dara temple would become quadripartite and no longer consist of the main architectural point of comparison with the Solomonic temple.

Operations in the Temple

In the Solomonic temple, there was no such thing as the high priest, because this position only arose after the exile to govern Zerubbabel's temple and the priestly class as a whole. Instead, it was the king who was ultimately in charge of the temple, in a similar manner that an American president serves as the commander in chief of the military. He did not supervise any of the daily operations of the temple but was involved in high-level decisions and officiated the most prominent festivals and ceremonies.

One group who served in a capacity comparable to the board of directors at a major company was the "elders of the priests." These individuals consisted of the eldest member of each priestly family, and although the priests of the Solomonic temple all seem to be descended from Zadok, it is likely the smaller family groups were formed. The Levites and Aaronide priests seem to have been relegated to the smaller sanctuaries throughout Israel and Judah during the time of the Solomonic Temple, and the genealogies that connect Zadok with both Aaron and the Levites seem to have been generated to legitimize the Zadokites, who began to be heavily criticized by the Hebrew prophets (1 Chr. 5:27-41). The king likely consulted these "elders of the priests" when making high-level decisions concerning the temple.

After the king and elders, there was a head priest who reported directly to the king, along with a second priest (also called the superintendent of the temple) who reported to the head priest. These seem to have been primarily administrative roles, as it was the three "Keepers of the Threshold" who functioned as the senior officials in the temple. Beyond this level, the priestly hierarchy is unknown. Other offices in the temple, like the temple singers, appear to be confined to the second temple period.

The priests likely rose early and performed some daily maintenance chores in the temple. The priest who functioned as the cook prepared fresh baked bread, vegetables, and wine along with mutton from the voluntary sacrifices made the previous day. After chores and breakfast, one of the daily rituals of the temple was opening the doors with the special golden keys designed for this purpose (1 Sam. 3:15), a ritual that was also practiced in Egypt,

Mesopotamia, and in later Jewish tradition (Hurowitz, 2005, 86).

Once the doors of the temple were open, the priest's day would begin, and the first task of the day was to feed YHWH breakfast in a three-part daily morning ritual (de Vaux, 1997, 449-50). There was a whole burnt offering (translated as a "holocaust offering" in older translations) that the priest performed, most likely on the bronze altar in the *hêkal*. The priest would cut the throat of a one-year old lamb without any blemishes and pour its blood around the altar. The priest would then skin the lamb and cut it into four parts, which the priest then placed into the fire on top of the altar. While one priest was doing this, another priest pulled bread, made with a particular recipe, from the oven and placed it on the table in the *hêkal* along with a jug of wine (de Vaux, 1997, 415-16). A third priest took a shovel, scooped some charcoal out of the golden altar, sprinkled perfume onto the glowing embers and returned the scented coals to the altar (de Vaux, 1997, 423). The priests then said their morning prayers, and one example of such a morning prayer appears in Psalm 5 (de Vaux, 1997, 458).

After these daily morning rituals, a new father, along with his parents and in-laws, might approach the temple to offer a sacrifice of praise for his newborn baby. He would have brought with him a sheep or a goat, which might have a few minor blemishes, along with unleavened cakes and leavened bread. The father would then cut the throat of the animal he had brought and then hand it over to the priest (de Vaux, 1997, 416), and as before, the priest would pour the blood on the altar and then skin the animal. The priest would then butcher the animal and boil it. Once it was boiled, the priest would place the belly fat (now separated from the intestines), the kidneys, the liver, and the tail fat into the fire, most likely in the great altar in the courtyard. The priest then separated the right leg of the animal, handing it, along with one of the cakes, to another priest, who would take it inside the temple to cook for the priests to eat for lunch. The remaining meat of the animal was then handed to the new father, and the father and his extended family would then sit in the temple courtyard and eat the mutton together. Another priest was likely stationed at the gate of the courtyard to ensure that they finished all of the sacrificial meat without any leftovers.

After this ritual, a poor man who had ejaculated the night before during

intercourse with his wife might approach the temple to offer a sacrifice for sin (Lev. 15:25-33). "Sin" in the Israelite conception was not necessarily disobedience but an act that made the individual unclean, which may or may not involve disobedience. He would bring with him two pigeons and hand them to the priest in the courtyard, and the poor man would then confess his "sin" to the priest. The priest would take one pigeon, slit its throat, put some blood on the horns of the altar and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar before putting the bird into the fire. The second pigeon was then plucked and cooked and sent into the temple for the priests' lunch.

Each day was obviously different and might consist of officiating voluntary sacrifices offered to show devotion to YHWH or votive sacrifices in fulfillment of a vow. There might be a man who swore under oath that his neighbor stole a sheep from his supervisor and later investigation revealed that he lied to the court. In addition to repaying the neighbor his court fines, he was also obliged to offer a ram to YHWH as reparation (Lev. 5:20-26). A man who became jealous of his wife and accused her of sleeping around, but was proven wrong might bring a grain offering of two loaves baked on a tray (Num. 5:14-15). One would be burned in the altar and the other added to the lunch or dinner of the priests.

Each evening, the priests offered their evening prayers, such as the one found in Psalm 4, and they would again prepare dinner for YHWH in the same way they had prepared breakfast. In ceremonial fashion, the "Keepers of the Threshold" would then shut and lock the temple doors with their golden keys. They would then eat their evening meal, consisting of the meat and bread received during the afternoon sacrifices, and they would then perform evening chores and any minor repairs to the temple before retiring to bed for the night.

The Destruction of the Temple

The Solomonic temple stood for almost 400 years as a symbol of the presence of YHWH in Judah, and while the northern kingdom of Israel was ravaged and finally annexed entirely by the Assyrians in 720 BCE during a campaign led by Sargon II, Judah remained. As this Assyrian power waned and became eclipsed by the rise in prominence of the Babylonian empire, Judah aligned itself with Egypt (likely not entirely of its own accord) and became an Egyptian vassal state around 630 BCE.

Once the Babylonian king stabilized the domestic politics in Babylonia and secured his own borders; the Babylonians began moving west and acquiring more territory as they did so. They took the vast Assyrian empire by 609 BCE, and in 604 BCE, King Nebuchadnezzar II demanded tribute from Judah. The Judean king, Jehoiakim, complied, thereby transferring allegiance from Egypt to Babylon.

In 600, after the Babylonians had made a failed attempt to attack and enter Egypt, Jehoiakim decided that aligning with Egypt was once again a good idea and refused to pay tribute to Nebuchadnezzar. It took Nebuchadnezzar a couple years to respond to Jehoikim's rebellion, but in 597 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Jerusalem and laid siege to it, taking Jehoiachin (who had only three months prior inherited the throne from his father at the age of 18) prisoner.

Jehoiachin, who had only reigned in Jerusalem for three months before it was overrun by the Babylonian army, would pay for his father's actions. Jehoiachin was carried off captive to Babylon along with his family and 10,000 soldiers, mechanics and ruling elites in the city, including the Judean prophet Ezekiel.[ii] This was the second of three deportations the Judeans would face at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.

In addition to carrying off people, Nebuchadnezzar helped himself to some of the vessels in the Jewish temple, bringing them to Babylon and dedicating them to the Babylonian god Marduk. As part of his efforts to keep the region under his control, Nebuchadnezzar then installed a king of his own. The

Babylonian king appointed Mattaniah, Jehoiakim's brother, as a puppet, and Mattaniah took the throne name Zedekiah.

Less than a year after Nebuchadnezzar had handpicked him for the Judean throne, in 597 B.C. Zedekiah held an anti-Babylonian summit in Jerusalem to discuss possible battle plans and strategy for overthrowing the Babylonian oppressors. He gathered representatives from Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Sidon and Edom (Jer. 37:1-12), and it is apparent that the animosity towards Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar in Jerusalem overwhelmed Zedekiah's gratitude to the king for placing him on the Judean throne. It's believed they planned a rebellion that would coincide with an uprising of city-states to the east of Babylon set to take place two years later, but this plan seems to have come to naught when they realized the cowardice of their ally to the east.

In 594 BCE, Zedekiah of Judah made a visit to Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, most likely to assure him of his continued loyalty (Jer. 51:59), and the prophet Jeremiah, whose politics had always been pro-Babylonian, offered to help Zedekiah with this visit. In great prophetic fashion, Jeremiah composed a letter containing an oracle about the ultimate destruction of Babylon (Jer. 51:1-58) and instructed Zedekiah to read the letter aloud and cast it into the Euphrates River, signifying with this act that any plans to destroy Babylon were doomed to fail (Jer. 51:61-64).

In 589 B.C., Psammetichus II died, and his son Hophra (also called Apries) took the Egyptian throne. Some scholars suggest that this marked a turning point in Nebuchadnezzar's foreign policy as it related to the small city-states in the Ḫatti region. Rather than allowing them to continue to rule themselves independently as vassal states of Babylonia, he would conquer them and rule over them himself so that they would become Babylonian provinces. Both Zedekiah and the king of Ammon got wind of this change in policy, and confident in the support he would receive from the new Egyptian Pharaoh Hophra, Zedekiah now took his stand against Nebuchadnezzar and refused to pay his annual tribute.

In response to Zedekiah's defiance, Nebuchadnezzar brought the force of his entire Babylonian army against the city of Jerusalem in 588 BC. They began by building a circumvallation wall around the city. As soon as Zedekiah realized Nebuchadnezzar was coming for him, he sent the

commander-in-chief of the Judean army, Koriah, to appeal to Egypt and its new Pharaoh for support, but the new Pharaoh's sorry excuse for support only managed to create a minor diversion for the Babylonian army. This minor diversion allowed some of the inhabitants of the city to escape, but it certainly was not what Zedekiah was hoping to receive. The Judean prophet Jeremiah tried to leave the city at this time as well, purportedly for business reasons, but Jerusalem officials caught Jeremiah attempting to leave and questioned him. They did not buy his story that in the middle of this life-threatening siege to the city, he had to buy a field in a neighboring village. Therefore, they arrested him and charged him with deserting to the Babylonians, which is what they suspected was his true motive for trying to leave the city, and then beat him and threw him into a prison. (Jer. 37:11-15).

The siege of Jerusalem lasted only two years, and it's clear from Jeremiah's prophecies that Nebuchadnezzar's army was not only attacking Jerusalem itself but several of the fortified cities of Judah that were supporting it: "… the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and against all the cities of Judah that were left, Lachish and Azekah; for these were the only fortified cities of Judah that remained." (Jer. 34:7). Archaeological finds also indicate that the Babylonians also destroyed the Judean towns of Beth Shemesh, Gezer, and Tell el-Hesi at this time.

In February 1935, archaeologists digging at Tell ed-Duweir, the site of ancient Lachish in Israel, found 18 inscribed potsherds, called ostraca, and these Lachish ostraca provide a close-up look at what this siege was like for the inhabitants who lived (or died) through it. The fourth letter is most telling for this context and its text reads as follows:

> "May Yahweh cause my lord to hear good tidings even now today!
>
> I have written on the (gate) door according to all (the instructions) which you sent to me.
>
> With regard to (the instructions) which my lord sent about the matter of Beth-ha-rapid, there is no one (left) there.

And as for Semachiah, Shemaiah took him and sent him up to the city; and (hence) I, your servant, am unable to send him thither again today; but surely in the course of (tomorrow) morning, I shall send (him).

And may (my lord) know that we are watching for the fire-signals of Lachish according to all the signs which my lord arranged, for we can no longer see (the signals of) Azekah."

One of the ostraca

The Babylonian army finally managed to breach the city wall that was protecting Jerusalem in 587 B.C., allowing them to swarm into the city. There appears to have been a few months of negotiations between the Babylonians and the Judeans regarding terms of surrender, and during that time King Zedekiah fled under cover of night. The Babylonians spotted him and gave chase, finally capturing him around the city of Jericho. Zedekiah was brought to the seat of Nebuchadnezzar's operations in Ḫatti, the city of Riblah, where the Babylonians paraded Zedekiah's sons before him and killed them in front of his eyes. Then the guards turned their swords on Zedekiah himself and gouged out his eyes. Having lost his sons and his eyesight, they bound him in chains and led him captive to Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar then ordered his general, Nebuzaradan, to plunder the palace and the Temple of Solomon before setting them both ablaze. He was then to go throughout the city, destroying all of the prominent architectural

structures and other infrastructure, essentially razing the city to the ground. Nebuzaradan then collected the majority of the local population and transported them as captives to Babylon, the most prominent deportation of people from Judah.

The date of this population transfer, 586 B.C., is the one most commonly cited when speaking of the Judean exile, and the image of the destroyed temple has played a prominent part in Exilic thought and theology ever since.

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[i] The deaths of Amnon and Absalom are both recorded in the Deuteronomistic History. This source, however, is strangely silent on the fate of Daniel (Chileab), David's second born son. The most likely scenario is that he had also died by the time of David's death, but this is admittedly just an inference based on his conspicuous absence from this jockeying for the royal inheritance.

[ii] Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, X 91-100.